

RECORD OF WORTENIA WAR

ウォルテニア 戦記

VIII

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RECORD OF WORTENIA WAR

— Wortenia Senki —

- VOLUME 4 - Zalda Kingdom War (II)

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[Hasutsuki]

「ああ、うちの双子が
ペリフェリアで買い込んだ品物さ」

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「火！火だあ！」
兵士達の口から
断末魔の叫びが迸る。

「あなた達に『狂鬼』の
ネルシオスが娘の力を見せてあげる」



「化け物だぜ？ あれはさ」

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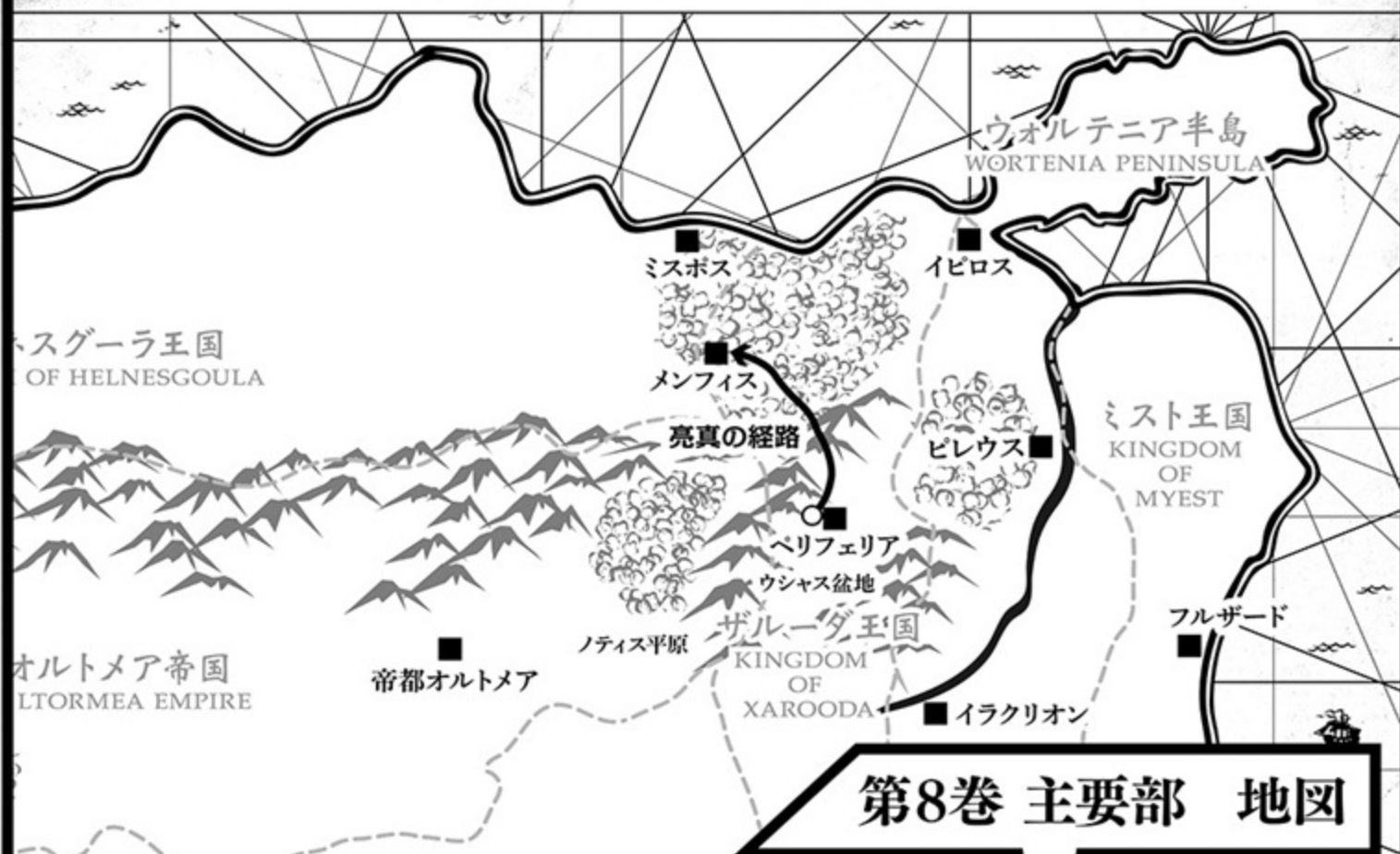


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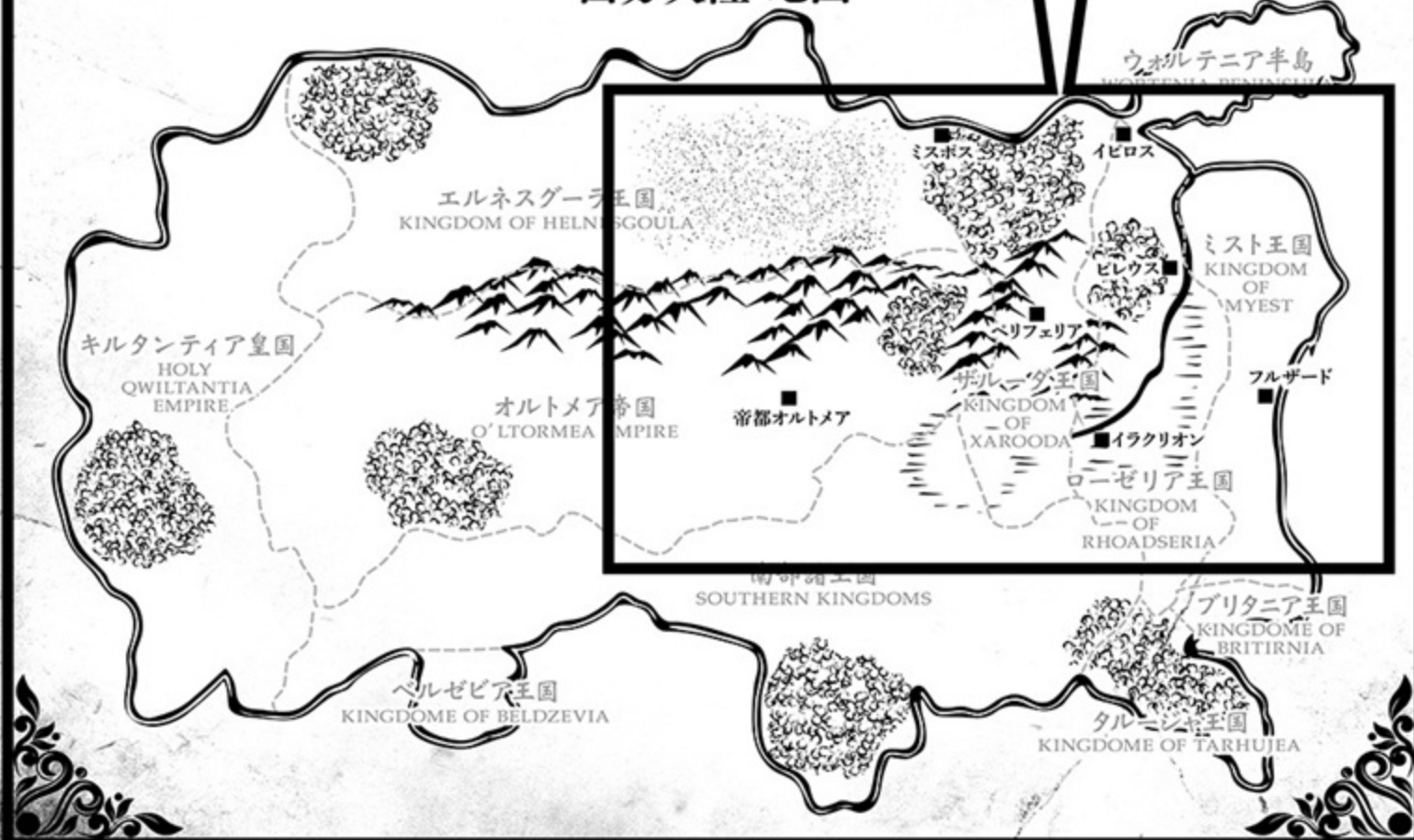


WORLD MAP of 《RECORD OF WORTENIA WAR》



第8巻 主要部 地図

西方大陸 地図



Chapter 19

Each Speculation 1

“You accomplished such a difficult task very well. Thank you for your hard work, Kevin. Has everyone come out okay?”



Mikoshiba Ryouma addressed the five people who kneeled down in front of him, while showing dignity as much as possible.

Still, he could not suppress his worry toward the well-being of the five people.

Ryouma basically wanted a more friendly interaction, but Lione told him to be more dignified around soldiers.

Several months had passed since then. Although he was slightly awkward, he had become considerably accustomed to the nobility behavior.

Although Ryouma was someone who hated the behavior of flaunting power, in this world, nobility was part of social structure, it seemed like he would get despised by the surrounding nobles and knights if he showed too much of a friendly attitude toward commoners.

(Though I think this kind of behavior is annoying...)

Despite having those kind of thoughts, he also understood the necessity of a working structure within society.

Being arrogant and haughty won't earn him trust from the soldiers, but on the other hand, the soldiers won't be able to properly work without a clear chain of command within the military.

“Your words are too generous for us. Milord.”

Following Kevin's words, the other four who kneeled one step behind also honored Ryouma by lowering their head deeply.

Milord was the honorific title Kevin and the other soldiers use to call Ryouma.

Although Ryouma himself didn't like it because it gave too much of an aristocratic feeling, it was also somewhat better than when they called him young master or sir feudal lord.

It was not like the soldiers could call him 'boy' like Lione did either, thus they all settled down and use Milord to call him, similar to how Iga's clansmen called him.

Actually, Ryouma lived in a house built in the middle of the city, thus it was never wrong to call him any of that.

“Somehow we managed to survive without using our trump card.”

Ryouma nodded silently while listening to Kevin's report who also moved his hand to the small bottle they hung behind their back.

The small bottle was one of the trump cards Ryouma had prepared for the battle, but they had managed to end everything without using it.

Right now, a satisfied smile could be seen on Lione's face who was standing behind Ryouma.

For her, they were soldiers whom she had raised from nothing.

For Lione and the member of the Red Lion mercenary group, these soldiers were their little babies.

That was why they felt satisfied looking at Kevin and the others' growth.

“Good, if you used that, obtaining the victory itself would be an easy task but, at the same time it would cause us to have a troublesome relationship with the Zalda Kingdom as well.”

「ああ、うちの双子が
ペリフェリアで買い込んだ品物さ」

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In addition to magic arts and team collaboration, Ryouma had also given Kevin and the others a trump card.

That was why Ryouma was convinced that even in a worst-case scenario they would still obtain victory.

By using it, it would be easy for Kevin and the others to win.

However, that trump card was a double-edged sword.

In the middle of a battlefield aside, since officially this fight was a match, if they use 'that', people might call them cowards.

Since it was a bit different compared to hiding one's ability to surprise the enemy.

(Well, I did choose these five because I knew they could win the battle without using it.)

Having their body forged by training in the wortenia peninsula every day, and magic arts acquired after harsh training. In addition to that, Kevin also had strong solidarity toward his friends who crawled up from the bottom together, and he also had respect toward the living.

Although they still have room to grow since they were still young, they had already reached a good standard as soldiers, and as knights.

“Sir, on that point, we've already received a warning from Laura-sama beforehand..... She said we should only use it when we don't have any other way to win...”

Following Kevin's words, the other four behind him nodded their head.

Ryouma could see a sharp light glint in their eyes. It showed their determination to win no matter what the cost.

And also a proof that they understood the role they had been given.

They wouldn't be able to have such attitudes if Ryouma had ordered them around high-handedly since the beginning.

(I guess I'm not wrong. The best result was a draw without anyone winning... These guys also seem to understand that. And that old man as well...)

Ryouma remembered the face of Julianus while he was looking at the back of the five people leaving the tent.

Naturally, Ryouma could not allow his men to lose, but winning was never the best option.

For Mikoshiba Ryouma, if he wanted to raise his status, he could just won the battle, but the best way in this situation was to end the match after the spectator acknowledged Ryouma's power and before the battle truly ended.

Ryouma had planned to propose to end the battle before the victor could be decided while looking at the timing, but it was a pleasant surprise for him that the King, Julianus the First, also had the same thought as him and made his decision.

To be honest, Ryouma initially didn't expect Julianus to have such ability since there was a rumor that he was a mediocre king, but Ryouma's evaluation regarding the king had changed little by little since the time he met him during the audience.

The king was sensitive in regard to the victory and defeat, and managed to choose the option that didn't hurt him the most.

To do that might sound simple, but to be able to do something like that, the person needed to have a strong self-control as to their own desires.

“Up until here, everything is according to plan, no?”

Sara asked Ryouma who was sitting in his chair.

“Right, somehow I guess... Like this, we won't be ignored when we give an opinion during the war council tomorrow I guess...”

Ryouma gulped the wine in his glass in one breath and then exhaled his breath to relax.

“Besides, it was fortunate for us that his majesty the king was a better person than I thought.”

“Ah, I can understand that. Ryouma-sama, as expected, the reason why his majesty ended the match at that time was...”

Lione nodded her head in response to Laura's remark.

"I guess he understands the trouble that would come if he loses the match. Not only that, instead of stopping the match by ordering the referee, he directed Grahart to enter the match and interfere. Since he managed to see through everything, I guess I have no complaints..."

Julianus declared the match had ended without prior consultation simply because he had realized Ryouma's true intentions.

"In addition to that, he managed to bring out the parasites within his own people. That old man was really formidable."

Following Lione's remark, Ryouma smacked his tongue.

"Che, he's indeed a sly old man. After he found out my intention, he actually used it for his own good..."

Despite saying that Ryouma didn't sound displeased.

Sara then poured more wine into his empty glass.

"Like this, the plan should bear fruit then, boy?"

"Indeed, I was a little bit pessimistic when it came to the realization of our plan, but like this, we definitely could achieve it. It seems like getting permission from Lupis beforehand had not become a waste."

In response to Lione's question, Ryouma answered while laughing merrily, he then gulped his wine in one go.

"Everything would depend on the result of tomorrow's war council..."

Responding to Sara's remark with an empty glass on his hand, Ryouma leaned his body onto his chair in silence.

While he was looking at the flickering lamp, the glass was filled with wine once again.



“We had a lot of unexpected results...”

To the man’s voice, all the people present voiced their agreement.

“Indeed, I never thought that such result would come out.”

“That Gurido was being careless. To think his subordinates would lose to such children.”

Inside a nobleman mansion near the castle, eight men sat surrounding a roundtable.

Looking at their attire, they were definitely nobles with high status.

And looking at their arrogant expressions engraved on their faces, it was obvious what kind of lifestyle they had.

“Your Excellency... What are we going to do now? Despite this match being for the purpose of driving a wedge into the relationship between Rozeria and the Zalda Kingdom, with this kind of result, that esteemed person won't be convinced.”

“That's right. Like this, there's no meaning for me to specially demand an action from that pig-headed person.”

Hearing those words, laughter escaped from all the men surrounding the roundtable.

It were such vicious waves of laughter.

“Earl Schwarzhelm huh? He was a funny guy indeed. That man’s behavior during the audience. When I looked the way he was shouting, I nearly burst into laughter.”

“Agreed. Such a stubborn person, I wonder what kind of face he will make when he realizes that his actions were harmful to the kingdom and the king he loved.”

The men laughed again thinking back how Earl Schwarzhelm talked desperately to the king.

And after they laughed for a while, a person began to speak.

“However, that young man is certainly dangerous... Now I can understand Saitou-dono and Her imperial highness Sardina's feelings.”

In response to the person words, the other men showed a half doubtful expression.

“Is that so? I don't think he is that dangerous though?”

“I feel the same. Although certainly, he was worthy of evaluation, despite being placed in a remote area called Wortenia peninsula, he had managed to gather such soldiers. But still, even if he brings five hundred men with him, that alone won't be enough to influence the grand battlefield, and I'm doubtful that he could work with the other nobles with mixed units.”

That judgment was not entirely wrong.

At the minimum, one knight order needed 2,500 men, with that amount of soldiers, one could influence a grand scale battlefield.

In such battlefield, it was dangerous to operate troops numbering less than 500.

In actual battle, probably he would have been combined with nobles who brought the same number of soldiers to create a mixed troop.

If so, Mikoshiba Ryouma's army would just become one part of a company.

Which meant, regardless of how good Ryouma's troops were, if he was to be paired with inferior nobles who were poor when it came to cooperation, their overall ability as a corps would drop dramatically.

“Of course, I knew that. But still, It is kind of worrisome...”

Silence dominated the room.

The gaze of the men surrounding the table gathered at the one called His Excellency.

The man was quite powerful even among the men presented in the room.

“Will he disturb the Empire's advance just like Joshua Belharres, you meant?”

“Indeed, his army might have been useless in a grand scale, but if he can put some ingenuity in it, with such quality soldiers, he might be able to do something damaging... And then the secret agreement we've obtained from Her highness Sardina which we've worked hard on, might break down.”

All of the men inside this room had a lot of common points.

Arrogant, greedy and also hungry for honor and power. Also, the Zalda Kingdom's leading noble families which ruled vast territories.

But the biggest common points was that they were people who were willing to sell their own country for riches.

“Despite the early success of eliminating General Belharress, not much progress happened afterwards.”

“Joshua Belharres. I heard that he was just a third son, but why... In this one year, Her highness Sardina also seems to have difficulty dealing with that guy as well.”

A sigh leaked from the men while saying those words.

“Well, there's nothing we can do immediately right now. We will see the result of tomorrow war council first, and after that we'll decide what to do. Now then, may our prosperity continue as time goes on.”

Words of approval came out one after another, and these men raised their glasses filled with wine.

“All for the prosperity of our family.”

“““For prosperity!”““

After they drank the wine in a single breath, they smashed the glass of wine to the floor all at once.

“To think you dare to disturb us... I wonder, who are you?”

After the man called His Excellency muttered those words, a man showed up while

stepping on the fragments of the glass.

As if the things under his feet were insects...

Chapter 20

Each Speculation 2

Two days had passed since the battle match happened.

Right now, there were more than 30 people gathered inside a big room within the castle.

“These are the conditions our country currently is in. Today, I would like ladies and gentlemen here to discuss it and find a way to break our current situation.”

A map of the Zalda Kingdom was spread on the desk.

Grahart said those words while pointing his baton at pieces representing army units and forts on the map.

“I would like everyone to help defend our country.”

Sitting down next to Grahart, Julianus the First opened his mouth.

What was happening right now was a military assembly of the three nations that occupied and dominated the eastern end of the western continent dubbed a joint war council.

In addition to the Generals of the Zalda Kingdom and also those sent by the Mist and Rozeria Kingdoms, nobles and ministries of the Zalda Kingdom who dealt with diplomacy and finances were also present.

For most of them, this was the first time they met each other.

Inside the room, also present was the Zalda Kingdom’s king, Julianus the First.

Up until now, only in a few occasions did Julianus the first showed up during war councils.

With the king present, it also showed how much dire the situation within the Zalda Kingdom was.

With the king being present, the war council was full of heat from the beginning.

“No, I think we should maintain the frontline as it is while letting the coalition of armies to pressure the Ortomea Empire so that they back down!”

When a nobleman shouted those words, the young knight beside him snapped at his words.

“What are you saying?! That's what Ortomea want us to do. Their aim is to occupy the national land while waiting for the chance to crush our army and occupy the country!”

“Calm down. In my opinion, the Zalda, Mist and Rozeria Kingdoms alone won't stand a chance against Ortomea. Isn't it better for us to wait until Ernestgora participate?”

“About that, since the outbreak of the war you've kept saying it, but even after a year had passed, they have not made any moves at all.”

“But still, we won't be able to hold the frontline by ourselves. We need to drag Ernestgora by all means. That's why we should make more effort for that, don't you think so?”

“Are you stupid?! There's no reason for Ernestgora to help our country. Don't you know what the Queen of that country is called?!”

“Agreed! She only moves her army near the border, while answering our messenger evasively so she must have planned on obtaining our country's land.”

Regarding the problem of Ortomea Empire invasion, the empire was having difficulties regarding the supply lines since they were surrounded by enemies from many directions, thus the elder generation of the officials suggested that the alliance should continue defensive battles while waiting for an opening, on the other hand, the young generation had developed a self-theory that they should make a rally to keep the morale of the conscripted commoners high.

Everyone voiced their wisdom and vigorously gave their opinion.

Meanwhile, four people Ryouma, Lione, and the Marfisto sisters were gathered in one of the corners of the room while observing carefully the others with a cold gaze.

“Fuh, they are all vigorously trying to be a smartass huh?... Damn it, if we continue with this situation, we're already in a checkmate then. What are they doing shouting things that are certainly obvious.”

Hearing Ryouma mutters, Lione smiled bitterly.

Although he was saying those words carefully in a low voice, it was still words that should not be spoken inside this war council.

But still, the reason why Lione didn't rebuke Ryouma was clear.

(Geez, boy, you're being too harsh... But then again, it is the truth, so it can't be helped eh...)

The contents of the hot debate that were currently being held in front of them had already been considered and discussed among the five people including Sakuya who was not currently in this place.

That was why, Ryouma and the others thought the heated argument that happened in front of them was just a mere farce.

In the first place, the Zalda Kingdom national power was less than a third of the Ortomea Empire.

It finally had enough power to equal Ortomea Empire after the three eastern countries united their forces.

However, Rozeria was exhausted due to the civil war, and the Zalda Kingdom itself had suffered a massive defeat during the early invasion on the Notiz plains.

(If we stay like this... The fate of this country has already been sealed...)

Ryouma didn't felt shaken with his own assessment of the current situation.

He had the will to face the disadvantaged that appeared in front of him.

Lione understood that possessing such will was one of the characteristics of Mikoshiba Ryouma and one of the reasons why he kept surviving despite all of the predicaments.

“The situation was already to the point that the front line was pushed near the capital’s suburb... As it is, the north and south of the national lands would be both cut off from the capital, if that happened, they would be defeated individually. Thus this country would meet its end...”

The Zalda Kingdom’s land area was close to a rectangular shape extending from north and south.

The capital city Periveria was located in the center, and also closer to the eastern border.

The frontline was a mountainous area three days walk on foot from the capital.

The army led by Joshua Belharres was desperately keeping the frontline in check at this very moment.

However, speaking frankly, the invasion of the Ortomea Empire had advanced little by little every day.

Thus, it was necessary to reinforce him as soon as possible.

“Well, it is impossible to turn around the current situation here simply by telling them straightforwardly to do so after all. Or at least, I have no intention of doing so...”

Lione shook her head with a bitter smile.

The current situation of Zalda Kingdom had already been analyzed by Ryouma and the others.

The conversation Ryouma had with the others last night was re-emerging inside his mind.



One year ago, after the Ortomea Empire army had achieved a decisive victory, they advanced their army eastward, then they stopped their advance near the mountainous area.

There they built a fortress, and after they finished doing that they took advantage of their national power and brought a lot of additional troops and supplies to the Zalda Kingdom.

After reorganizing, they then gradually moved eastward from that fort.

And it was clear by looking at the advance route the Ortomea Empire army took that they were not rushing toward the capital.

The route they had taken was slightly south of the royal capital city Periveria.

Which meant the aim of Ortomea empire was to divide the south part of the kingdom from the Capital.

Once it was divided, the nobles who had territory in the south of Zalda Kingdom will be blocked and isolated, unable to contact the capital, and from there the Ortomea Empire could just take on and destroy the shaken nobles one by one.



“As expected, I think we can only break the current deadlock by using Ryouma-sama's plan...”

To Sara's remark, Lione lifts her lips and shrugged her shoulders.

“I think that is impossible right now. Well, certainly, if we could realize the things we had discussed yesterday, we can change the situation drastically. However, whether or not we can realize it is the problem. After all, changing an opinion is something that is not easy to do, don't you think?”

“Another problem is the Mist Kingdom... Whether or not they are willing to go with our plan is a huge question.”

In response to Lione's remark, Laura nodded her head lightly.

“Well, Mist Kingdom aside. I've ordered Sakuya to gather some information on them. Besides, I've not yet told the aforementioned plan to his majesty, Julianus. For now, we should persuade Elena-san and his majesty, Julianus, first.”

Then the line of sight of Ryouma was directed toward a young woman standing in between Grahart and Elena.

She had gorgeous raven-black hair and smooth white skins.

Her age was around mid-twenties and early thirties.

Her elegant behavior and appearance made her look like a princess from somewhere.

And if it was only her beauty, she would be a good match on par with Queen Lupis.

“Eclatia Marinel... goes by another name, 'Windstorm'...Although its hard to see which part of her bear the nickname due to her appearance...”

Lione murmured those words while showing a distorted expression as if she had chewed some worm.

Certainly, in Ryouma's eyes, the appearance of Eclatia could only be associated with an elegant noble daughter.

“Lione-san had met her once in the past, am I wrong?”

Before heading toward the Zalda Kingdom, Bolts had told him something about it.

She didn't expect Ryouma to know about it, Lione opened her eyes in surprise.

“Bolts told you huh? Geez, that blabbermouth guy... Yes, I've met her before. A few years ago, I've fought against her during the time when the Mist Kingdom collided with the various southern countries. In the first place, her name was already pretty well known back then, while we were only one of the pawns in that war. I think the other side was not even aware of us.”

The thing that appeared inside Lione's memory was a bitter defeat.

Lione kept on talking about her memories as if she was spitting some regret.

“I thought that it was dangerous, thus I stopped the pursuit back then, which in turn makes me glad that I took such decision. Anyhow, only our company didn't sustain much damage, while the other mercenaries got completely annihilated... Thus we ended up being defeated... At that time, it wouldn't have been weird if we had ended up getting obliterated by her scheme... Honestly, she has such a gentle face yet she's such a scary woman. “



Looking at Lione's attitude that was filled with regret while admitting Eclatia's ability, Ryouma could only respond with a faint smile.

In Ryouma's eyes, as a commander, Lione had an excellent ability.

She was capable of making a calm judgment and had the capacity to inspire soldiers.

Although sometimes she would lose her temper, she was still able to immediately hold it down and remain calm.

If there was no such things such as status barrier, she would have been hired by many countries.

Having this Lione recognizing Eclatia Mariel's competence, Ryouma could not make light of her.

(Well, it is not bad in having more capable people around right now... Because Elena and I will not overturn the current predicament alone... I also should make an acquaintance with Joshua Belharres, who currently remains in the front line, as soon as possible... And whether or not the Mist Kingdom can see eye to eye with us is also a problem.)

Until this very day, Ryouma still could not see the true intentions of the Mist Kingdom's reinforcements.

What was their aim, and how far were they willing to sacrifice.

It was too dangerous for Ryouma to voice his plan if he didn't know about the others' thoughts.

"I can expect something from the way they look at it, I guess..."

How far were they willing to sacrifice to save the country...

That words were not only being directed to the Zalda Kingdom's king Julianus the First.

At the time Ryouma muttered those words, he was looking calmly at the foolish people who had fiercely continued their heated argument from the corner of the room...

Chapter 21

Each Speculation 3

“Do you really think we would do such a thing?! Are you making fun of the Zalda Kingdom?! There's no way we want to survive while enduring such humiliation!”



It was midnight, a time where most of its residents already slept, such high voice resounded inside one of the rooms within the royal castle.

It was a voice filled with fury, the roar of a lion whose pride was being hurt.

Grahart stared at Ryouma full of anger.

Julianus had intentionally ordered the people to empty the room beforehand, but due to how high the voice was they had unintentionally turned theirhis eyes toward the door.

That big voice was certainly suited for someone who was used to command in battle, but it was not suitable for someone doing private talk.

Bitter smiles also appeared on Elena's face sitting next to Ryouma, and also on the woman who was sitting on the left of Grahart.

“This was never about can or cannot. In fact, there is no other way... Or do you want to be destroyed by Ortomea just like this?”

Ryouma talked back without even changing his complexion accepting all of Grahart anger.

“What are you saying?! We have not lost to anyone yet! In the first place, your proposal is an empty theory. If it was only my nation we might lose, but not if we have Rozeria and Mist Kingdoms like now, that is what I think. If you thought the other two countries would accept your proposal, then you're insane!”

“Well, that is indeed true... Then, Grahart-san, do you have another way for us to win this war? There are several methods if you just want to delay the extinction of your nation for a few years, but if you want to save the Zalda Kingdom and win... Then there is no other way...”

“That is the purpose of the war council, to discuss this kind of things! Look at you, at that time you only kept silent in the corner of the room, and now you act all important! Your majesty! I set up this meeting due to Elena-sama reputation, but I think I cannot allow this to continue anymore! This is only a waste of time. Please return to your room.”

Grahart turned his face toward Julianus and urged him to leave.

However, Julianus replied while stroking his white beard, and narrowing his eyes.

“Well, wait, Grahart. We finally managed to set this meeting after going through all the troubles. Let's not rush to a conclusion.”

Listening to Ryouma's wish for a private talk, they had set this meeting with great effort.

Thus the King thought it was no good if they ended the meeting half-way.

“However, your majesty. This man's proposal is only a pipe dream. First of all, if we do it the way he said, our nation would end up becoming the possession of ErnestGora instead.”

However, what Julianus said after that was a surprise even for Grahart.

“Isn't that fine, Grahart?”

After he said those words, silence ruled the room.

Even Elena could not hide her surprised expression.

“Y-Your majesty...”

“What are you surprised about? If we stay just like this, we will end up as Ortomea Empire's vassal state, if not that, the only other way is to lead my people to an honorable death. Either way, the result will not change much from that. If that is the case then, why not choose to be a vassal state to the one with the better condition.”

If they fought until the end, then Zalda Kingdom's land would fall into ruin.

The lives of the people would also fall into ruin.

That also applied even if the Zalda Kingdom voluntarily suggested to become a vassal state via negotiation.

After all, a war was always filled with economic activity.

The more important the war expenditure they had to spend, the more money Ortomea Empire would squeeze next from Zalda who had become their vassal state.

Every year, they would've demanded the Zalda kingdom for a hefty tribute.

And also an unequal tariff rate.

The difference was whether they choose instant or slow death, no matter which one Zalda choose, their situation remained the same.

But, that was not because Ortomea Empire was an evil state either.

After all, they also understood that their country would end up falling if they did not recover the cost of war from somewhere.

“Becoming ErnestGora's vassal state is not a problem in itself. However, Mikoshibadono. It would be meaningless if we ended up with a situation that is similar to becoming Ortomea's vassal state. Am I right?”

Toward Julianus question, Ryouma nodded his head.

Ryouma also understood that was a question that naturally would come out.

“That was the reason why I had asked to gather the representatives from all three nations, the Zalda, the Rozeria, and the Mist Kingdoms. Well, first of all, I would like to correct something, what I suggested was not to become a vassal state, but an alliance of four countries with ErnestGora at the top... But then again, I can also understand, and it was also not completely wrong if you mistook this action as to become their vassal state.”

“The thing I don't understand the most is that! Why do we have to involve another country in our circumstances? Furthermore, we have repeatedly sent a messenger after the battle of Notiz Plain to encourage them to participate in the war. But look at the result, one year has passed but they never moved. I do not believe that your plan can be realized.”

Grahart bites at Ryouma again.

His words might be because of he hating the plan, but his words were also not wrong.

(Geez... Why won't you listen to someone until they finished speaking? Mikhail also did the same as him... Is this due to their occupation?)

Ryouma sighed hard.

Although Grahart was not wrong, Ryouma had also drawn the plan after many considerations.

If people listened to someone until they are finished talking, then most would come to understand each other, but most people would become irritated the moment certain topics they didn't like were brought open and then they would refuse to listen further.

It might be understandable since Grahart wanted to protect his country so much, but Ryouma's patience also had run out.

(In the first place, isn't this because of your incompetence that here I ended up as a reinforcement? After all, the defeat of the Notiz Plain was also because you people had fallen into the enemy's trap. You morons! If you guys don't like my plan, then clean up your own mess by yourself!)

For Ryouma, he wanted the Zalda Kingdom to survive.

If the Zalda Kingdom fell here, the Ortomea Empire would overrun the Eastern countries like an avalanche.

The Mist Kingdom might survive to some extent due to their strong economic power, but the Rozeria Kingdom which had not yet recovered from last year civil war wouldn't be able to survive.

Or rather, since Lupis policy was not functioning properly, the situation within the Rozeria Kingdom itself might be worse than last year.

Under such circumstances, there was no way they could handle another problem.

For Ryouma, he had racked his brain out just to think of a way out of this desperate situation.

Nevertheless, he could not forgive someone shouting in the middle of him telling his plan to the point that it instigates Julianus to stand up.

Dark flames began to burn inside Ryouma's heart.

And they were gradually eating Ryouma's reason.

(Fine then, should I murder you?)

Such idea crossed Ryouma's mind.

Even if he was the leader of a knight order, if Ryouma ordered the Iga clan to send its best person to perform an assassination, he would die.

“Grahart-sama you're too fast at drawing the conclusion, don't you think? Mikoshiba-sama has not yet explained all of it you know? And just like his majesty Julianus had said, we have put a lot of effort just to make this meeting happen. It is up to you to decide if the plan is foolish or not, but first, how about listen to it until the end?”

A bright and refreshing voice echoed inside the room, it was a woman voice.

Listening to her voice, the fire of anger inside Ryouma's heart rapidly faded away.

(That was bad... Recently, my line of thought has become somewhat hasty... I guess, I felt unconsciously cornered too huh?)

Immediately making the nuisance disappeared.

That was not a wrong pattern of thought, but one could not live with that alone.

A hasty decision would only create another enemy.

Besides, in this kind of situation, it was better to have more allies even though they were a bit stupid.

Making such ally disappear was only a last resort.

“Marienel-dono... Do you find something worthy in this man's plan?”

Grahart expression became distorted from her unexpected words.

Since it was from a General of another country who had also come as a reinforcement, even if Grahart felt dissatisfied, he had no choice but to listen.

“Of course-desuwa. After all, it was quite an interesting plan...” <TLN: She speaks with 'desuwa' in every possible sentence, like an Ojou-sama? but hey, this is a translation novel, not romaji novel, thus I won't put that desuwa in every sentence.>

Saying that, Eclatia turned her eyes toward Ryouma.

“Mikoshiba-sama... am I right? I've heard your name... During the civil war last year, you had fought for her majesty Lupis and got a wonderful achievement. Am I right, Elena-sama?”

“Indeed, he is the best strategist and tactician I know... Just like I have said to Grahart-san before, but it seems like he could not believe it...”

Elena replied while waving her head as if feeling disappointed.

“H-However, which part of his plan is worth that much?...”

“Enough, Grahart. Leave the room if you can't listen to Mikoshiba-dono silently.”

Being admonished by his lord, Grahart showed a hesitated expression.

“I'm sorry for interrupting your talk. Grahart seems to have understood his actions as well. Could you continue?”

“Of course. Your majesty.”

Urged by Julianus, Ryouma nodded his head and continue talking about his plan.



“Elena-sama... He is indeed an able and sharp person...”

“Right, as far as I know, his strategy is top rate.”

“And also, as an individual warrior...”

After the talk was over, the only ones who remained inside the room were Eclatia and Elena.

Sitting face to face, they talked among themselves while drinking some wine.

“That was not just a mere clever plan, right?”

Elena nodded quietly after listening to Eclatia's muttering.

"I don't think it was just a mere clever plan. Since it was also a plan that has been brought out actively during the war council..."

"But then again, it was a plan that no one could realize in the past one year... Does Elena-sama think Mikoshiba-sama can do it?"

Elena swung her head responding to her question.

"I'm not sure. Although during the meeting, if it was that child I felt he could realize it... But to be honest, I'm not sure if he could move that northern female fox..."

Elena didn't lie.

If it was from the viewpoint of possibilities then Ryouma's plan had sufficient odds to succeed.

However, if she was asked if the plan would absolutely succeed, then she would shake her head.

To tell the truth, she thought the plan only had a 50-50 success rate.

"What about your thoughts Eclatia-san?"

This time Elena asked Eclatia a question.

"Of course I'm planning on sending a messenger this evening. As expected, this plan is too heavy for me to take an arbitrary decision... But I believe that person would approve this measure."

Elena and Eclatia have no authority to make a decision to ride or not on Ryouma's plan.

However, unlike Rozeria, which had exhausted its national strength and only had little options left, the Mist Kingdom still retained its economic and military power, so much so that it was possible for them to fight for several years alone.

If they thought there was no meaning to cooperate with the other two nations, then they could still fight alone.

“After thinking about the postwar consequences, I think it is better for us to cooperate... Although I'm a bit irritated that it has developed just like Mikoshiba-sama had wanted.”

Saying that Eclatia shrugged her shoulders while showing a mischievous smile like that of a child.

“If Eclatia-san already saw that much, then there's no meaning for me to say anymore... I guess it was a mistake to hold you back after the meeting like this?”

“There's no such a thing. I'm fortunate that I could talk with someone who holds the title of Rozeria's White Goddess of War like this.”

“Oh my, I'm a bit embarrassed if someone with the title of Windstorm said that to me.”

They both then laughed while tilting their glass filled with wine.

“Before this I was a bit worried about this war, but thanks to Mikoshiba-sama, I feel a little bit interested in it...”

A small mutter leaked from Eclatia's mouth.

Chapter 22

Each Speculation 4

Built within the Zalda Kingdom's territory, was an Ortomea Empire's fort.

The fort was built at the foot of the mountain range that lies on the border between the two countries, it was the most important fort for the invasion of Ortomea Empire.

In one of the rooms inside the fort, Sardina was laying her body on the sofa listening to Seria's report.

"The personnel and goods we have gathered at the Notiz fort would arrive here at least within a month. That was the report regarding the supply status."

Seria cut her words after she read the numbers listed in the documents.

Notiz fort had become a place where personnel and goods gathered from the Ortomea Empire.

From there, via the mountain range valley, they carried the goods to the highway and then brought toward the inner territory of the Zalda Kingdom.

"Good... Finally, we will finish all of this mess..."

Sardina shook her head while sighing.

This invasion had ended up as a costly invasion that span more than one year.

The disaster happened after the first battle against the Zalda Kingdom.

For Sardina who had thought that the war could end within six month, she could only curse her luck for the war that was still on-going even after a year.

Sardina who had nearly lost the same amount of soldiers as the enemy during the battle of Notiz Plain, stopped the advance of her troops in order to observe the movement of ErnestGora who had began to move their soldiers along the border of

their nation with the Zalda Kingdom.

Being wary of an intervention by a great nation such as ErnestGora, it was a natural decision for her to divide her army in two, the main force and the invading one.

<TLN: Some might use "Spearhead/Vanguard force" but hey the author uses Invading words. As for the purpose of her dividing the army, well, think if the ErnestGora actually cut off the supply lines of the invading force, she needs to save them by using the main force.>

Even when she thought back on it, Sardina didn't think that her decision was wrong.

As a result however, it was also true that Sardina's decision was one of the reasons that prolonged the conquest of the Zalda Kingdom.

If she had advanced with the army after the defeat of the Zalda Kingdom's main army as a whole, it was possible for her to capture the capital city of Periveria and move their troops into the Rozeria Kingdom by now.

"Finally, I can get rid of that bothersome man..."

Remembering the biggest cause of all this mess, Sardina murmured those words while chewing her thumbnail.

It was one of her bad habits whenever Sardina felt irritated.

"Is this about Joshua Belharres?"

"Thanks to that man, everything has become a complete mess..."

After his father Belharres' honorable death during the battle of Notiz Plain, Joshua had withdrew the surviving soldiers.

Although she had suffered the same casualties as the enemy, since the enemy commander-in-chief ended up dead, victory was indeed in Sardina's hand.

Although the competence of individual soldiers was important, the most critical elements during warfare were cooperation and command capabilities.

For Sardina, it was natural for her to feel convinced that she had obtained victory after the death of General Belharres, which the Zalda people thought of as the Kingdom's Guardian.

Indeed, within the Zalda Kingdom, no one boasted the same fame and track record as the deceased general.

However, the invasion army that should have proceeded smoothly met a counter-attack from the Zalda forces under the command of Joshua Belharres, leading the invasion force to end up with high casualties and fail.

Because of ErnestGora's movement, it was impossible to increase the invasion troops, but the invasion force should have enough power to invade deep into the Zalda Kingdom's territory since the enemy general was already dead, and the enemy chain of command should have become a complete mess too.

But such force was defeated by Joshua Belharres.

It was not because Sardina was stupid, Joshua had made use of the poor visibility and other features along the mountain valleys to his advantage, which caused her to praise him for his superb surprise attack.

And with Joshua's ability in leading a defensive battle, coupled with the sympathy after his father death, he had attracted the hearts of many Zalda aristocrats who were keen on protecting the country and their territory.

Thanks to that he was hailed as a hero...

At that moment, the outcast third son jumped into fame.

"We've been temporarily forced to pull in the Western Army which is strong in mountainous warfare. From here on out, I won't let you do as you please, Joshua Belharres."

In a war, the more troops one possessed, the more advantageous it would become.

But then again, even if that thought was not wrong, on a battlefield nothing was certain.

Sharp mountains and deep forests filled most of the Zalda Kingdom territory, making a commander unfamiliar with such topography unable to lead an army properly.

In addition, the metallic fullbody armor worn by the knights might have exerted an outstanding power in plain battle, but in the mountainous areas where there was a difference in elevations, such armor would only become a burden that exhausts the soldiers' physical strength.

However, Ortomea Empire could overcome such limitations by putting soldiers who had experience in irregular battlefields as well as provide them with a map that they had painstakingly made by making use of the locals.

With the soldiers quality becoming equal, the element that could determine the victor would be the number of soldiers one possessed.

(With the Zalda Kingdom's aristocrats turning over to us, strategic victory could have been achieved... I should not make any mistakes afterwards. Letting a prey escape once is enough...)

Carelessness, self-conceit, arrogance...

Sardina knew that such momentary mistakes could lead her into disaster.

Strategic planning fills only 99 percent of the victory conditions. A tactical victory was also needed to fill the 1 percent gap and make it a 100% decisive victory.

“Also, there is a letter sent by his majesty the emperor for your highness Sardina...”

When Sardina was drifting through the sea of thoughts, Seria took out a letter from her bosom.

“From father huh?... It must be filled with a reminder that the war with Zalda Kingdom needs to be finished soon, no?”

While sighing, Sardina sat up and fixed her posture.

For the past year, all the letters that had been delivered using fast horse and birds once a week had the same content.

(Father is too impatient... Though I can understand his feeling, but...)

Naturally, there were limits to both, national strength, and mobilization capability.

Not only that, the fighting along the border with ErnestGora on the western side of the continent had not ended yet.

It was natural that the Emperor wanted to end the battle quickly.

“Give me the letter...”

Seria handed the letter to her silently.

“Che...”

Sardina's face turned cloudy after she read the letter from the Emperor, and after she read one of the sentences inside the letter, she clicked her tongue.

Such an act was very rare for Sardina who had always kept her elegant appearance as the first princess of the Empire.

(It seems like bad news have come...)

An uneasy feeling appeared inside Seria's heart.

“Here, you read it as well...”

“Is it alright?”

Seria took the letter being presented to her after Sardina replied by nodding her head.

(I see... no wonder...)

Seria's facial expression who read the letter also turned cloudy.

“Here it comes, the northern female fox. Finally, she started to move...”

Seria sighed after she read the letter that informed them that ErnestGora army had started to move.

“As of now, their second corps had been stationed near the Zalda Kingdom's border...”

From the beginning of the war, Sardina had anticipated that this time would come someday.

However, one year had passed since the Notiz battle, and for her, it was definitely a bad timing to have them move now.

“Our plan of dividing the Zalda Kingdom is already in front of our eyes, and yet... Geez, why nothing has gone according to plan...”

All the bad fortunes in this war made her felt like the God of War hated the idea of Ortomea Empire becoming prosperous.

Most likely, ErnestGora had sent their spies into the Zalda Kingdom to monitor Sardina's movements.

“Is there any possibility that this movement is only a bluff? One year has passed since ErnestGora had declared war on both Ortomea Empire, and the Mist Kingdom, but all this time they only occupied the northern part of the Zalda Kingdom without moving south. If they had any intention to actively intervene in this war, then they should've moved a year ago.” *<TLN: Not sure why ErnestGora declared war on Mist kingdom, author didn't explain it, maybe it was typos by the author? It should be Zalda?, I didn't change it because the author tendency of foreshadowing>*

“Which means ErnestGora has no interest in moving to the south eh?”

Seria nodded her head to answer Sardina's question.

After the Notiz Plain, ErnestGora first corps had broken through the border, entered the Zalda Kingdom territory and occupied several cities located in the northwest of the country.

However, in the past one year, other than occupying those cities, ErnestGora troops had not moved.

Despite having replied to the letter sent by the Zalda Kingdom properly, they didn't make any move.

“One year had already passed. Your Highness had stopped the advance of our entire

army because of ErnestGora movement. I think this time is also a bluff to delay the movement of our army..."

"You might be right, even so, we still need to think about the countermeasures, just in case..."

This kind of problem, even if it was a bluff, one had to prepare a countermeasure...

Sardina and the others would not be able to stop ErnestGora from moving toward the south if they didn't prepare something.

And, while it might be true that ErnestGora had no intentions of moving toward the south, one could not be sure about the future.

Sardina had sent a messenger at the time when ErnestGora entered the Zalda Kingdom's border, suggesting that they should split the Zalda Kingdom into two, but as expected, no reply arrived.

Because of that, Sardina could not proceed to capture the Royal capital Periveria since it would expose her flank.

"What are we going to do now?"

Hearing Seria's question, Sardina creased her forehead.

(Wait for the reinforcements to arrive, then gain victory by dragging Joshua Belharres out... After that, lower the Zalda's morale by dividing the country into two north and south halves... We need to obtain a decisive victory by using a small amount of time... I guess that is the only way...)

What crossed Sardina's mind was the plan they had devised before the war broke out.

Just in case when they could not move that northern country into a negotiation table.

If Sardina kept being concerned about the movement of that country, she wouldn't be able to occupy the Zalda Kingdom for many years.

Sardina then opened a paper on the table, and immediately run her quill pen with intense force.

“Call back Sudou who is currently in Rozeria. As soon as the reinforcements from the west arrive, we will immediately begin our decisive battle. Also, sent this to father...”

Seria opened her eyes wide when she heard the content that needed to be written in the letter.

“Your Highness, you want Rolf-dono to come here?”

He was the leader of the imperial guard that had been praised by many countries as [The Emperor's Shield].

As one of the Emperor's trusted aides, he was the commander-in-chief of the Emperor's guard.

The moment when Rolf went to the frontline, was the moment the emperor himself moved.

“There's no other choice, no one is better in defensive battle than Rolf... After we move our army forward, the fort would be left empty with no one protecting it, we cannot afford that to happen.”

“There's the chance that Zalda would move and cut us from the flank is it?”

Sardina nodded her head in response to Seria's question.

If this fort fell, Ortomea Empire's soldiers would be disconnected from their homeland, unable to obtain their supply and become isolated.

Looking at the remaining of the Zalda Kingdom's soldiers and the quality of their commanders, such a thing had a low possibility of happening, but Sardina was aiming for perfection.

“As expected, I can't just move the Imperial Guard. However, I intend to have my close aides defend this fort. It is inexcusable but, I have no choice other than to convince my father... We absolutely cannot lose the next battle.”

Seria nodded her head in silent after she heard Sardina made her decision, then she turned her heels and left the tent.

“...Absolutely, we cannot lose...”

Sardina murmured those words once again to confirm her resolve while glaring at the sky outside via the tent’s window.

Various expectations intersected, while the decisive battle that would decide the fate of the Zalda Kingdom approached day by day...

<TLN: Imperial Guard, Imperial Knight Orders, Imperial army... This might be confusing for some people...

Here is a brief explanation,

-Imperial Guard is a unit under the Emperor's direct command, no General could give the Imperial Guard an order or move them unless the Emperor said so.

-Imperial Knight Orders are under Generals' command given by Imperial authority.

-lastly, the Imperial Army is a combination of both, under the command of the Emperor.>

Chapter 23

Northern Female Fox 1

From high above a cliff, Joshua put a cigar in his mouth while overlooking the transportation corps with a phoenix flag moving by on the highway, indicating that it belonged to the Ortomea Empire.

That place was the mountain range on the border of the Zalda Kingdom. Innumerable men and horses covered the highway.

That group was the army corp that had been tasked by the Imperial princess Sardina to carry the supplies from Ortomea Empire.

Just how much goods did they had brought, no one could really guess.

The Ortomea Empire was one of the three strongest countries in the western continent.

Such sight was as if to show the enormous national strength they possessed.

(I guess the information was right huh? Which means that that woman had become impatient...)

It was impossible for Ortomea Empire to gather that amount of supplies and just spent them on one front line no matter how much national strength they possessed.

(This is really troubling...)

With a bitter smile on his expression, the figure of the first imperial princess of the Ortomea Empire which he had confronted this past one year appeared inside Joshua's mind.

However, Sardina's figure inside Joshua's mind had no face.

Joshua only knew from the rumors and reports that Sardina was a beautiful woman, but in this world where photograph and tv basically were non-existent it was impossible for him to know the face of the princess from an enemy's country.

(Looking at this, that means they are planning on crushing us in one go by using their national strength huh? Just what I've expected, they have chosen that option... Well, looking from the various point of view, this is indeed a sound tactic.)

Somehow his expression looked casual despite all of the events.

Beard that had never been maintained.

The smells of liquor and cigar drifted from his whole body, his hair was also being unkempt.

Although he did not have the usual smell of cheap perfume which a prostitute would have used, the figure standing there was indeed the third son who had spent all his time in the slums inside the royal capital.

Joshua then summoned fire on his fingertip using fire magic arts, and brought the fire closer to the cigar in his mouth.

Then he quietly inhaled and enjoyed the tobacco for a moment.

(Sensing the movement of ErnestGora, she wants to deal with the obstacle before her eyes immediately. I guess she is pressed for time huh? Although, I guess we're also the same...)

Joshua's brain already knew that the Zalda Kingdom had little time left.

And it seemed that the Ortomea Empire also had the same problem.

In the past one year, the Zalda army had used irregular warfare by using the topography and successfully reduced the speed of the Ortomea Empire's progress, but they had not yet solved the fundamental problem.

It was like putting a life support treatment on a terminally ill patient and betting everything on the arrival of an unknown new medicine.

And the flock of people that were moving under the cliff was equal to that of a god of death who ruthlessly announced the death of the said sick patient.

(Well whatever... Either way, I've already decided to gamble my life and the destiny of

this country by following that man's plan, I just need to do my job here...)

The face of the man who had exchanged words with him for the first time appeared inside Joshua's mind.

It was a young man, younger than Joshua.

Furthermore, he was a man from an unknown origin which had become a noble.

However, the plan presented by the young man had sufficient value to even make Joshua bet everything on it.

The plan itself was not original in particular.

With just a little bit of wisdom, anyone could come up with such plan.

However, while it might be true that the plan was easy to come by, the possibility of the realization was near impossible.

(I can't help but think that he is an interesting man...)

The figure of Mikoshiba Ryouma with a fearless smile on his face appeared inside Joshua's mind causing him to lift his lips into a smirk.

Joshua knew that he himself was a hopeless gambler.

High risk, and high return.

It was a gamble several times more thrilling than the one he had on the outskirts of the town.

And from it, Joshua felt an indescribable feeling of excitement.

“Now then... It's almost time...”

From here on out, it was the biggest gambling he had ever made before.

It was a gambling betting the fate of the three eastern countries.

Joshua then threw away the cigar to his feet and step the fire with his boots.

At that moment, a ferocious expression emerged on Joshua's face.

“Geez, you're going to push all of the work on me huh? Such a good social position you have there...”

The one who spoke to Joshua with teasing words from behind was a mercenary woman with burning red hair.

“Are all the preparations finish already?”

“Yes, we can begin anytime...”

When he turned back looking at the person, Lione nodded with confidence.

“I see... Good work. Lione.”

“You’re welcome. Troublesome brat-san.”

Looking at the smiling Lione who said those words, Joshua leaked a sigh from his mouth.

Joshua knew that Lione was not as easy going as she sounded.

“My guys' skills are indeed good, but they are kind of the quirky type. Unless they admit it themselves that someone is above them, they won't easily bow their head.”

In fact, they won't even listen to the command of the knights dispatched from the royal capital Periveria.

They were soldiers specially organized by the late general Belharres. And now, since the general had died, the soldiers belonged to Joshua.

They were special because, after all, they were previously criminals such as small time bandits and thieves that vandalized the Zalda domestic territories.

General Belharres was a great knight and also a great strategist, he was aware that he could not win against the Ortomea Empire national strength if he fought straightforwardly, just like a knight would.

The size of the country, the national strength, human resources, basically the differences were too much.

No matter how much militaristic the Zalda Kingdom was, no matter how good a single knight was, they would not be able to compete because of the inferior numerical numbers. <TLN: You can take example of German Nazi vs the Soviet Union>

Besides, the Zalda Kingdom was not entirely made of rocks either.

Originally, the land was obtained by opening up forest and hills.

Although the Zalda Kingdom's king was a sovereign and the leader of the aristocrats, he was not an absolute ruler. <TLN: Basically the court which usually is filled with nobles hold significant power>

It was difficult to make a decision in the Zalda Kingdom without causing the nobles to ask questions, quite different compared to the Ortomea Empire where they were unified under the will of the Emperor.

Even a baby knew which one was better.

Therefore, General Belharres who knew about that, took various measures to compensate the national power difference between the Ortomea empire and the Zalda kingdom.

Naturally, the measures where he waged a war that deviated from the way of the knights was also included.

One of such measures was making the security within the Ortomea Empire to decline.

To that end, General Belharres had sent the bandit leaders who had been sentenced to death in Zalda to the Ortomea Empire, and ordered them to disturb the security there in exchange for their pardon.

Those men were people who had rougher lives compared to the mercenaries and the adventurers. And to make such men abide by her command confirmed Lione's ability.

“You're thinking too much. I didn't do anything special, I just teased them and kicked their asses a little bit. They are quite adorable.”

Lione laughed while narrowing her eyes.

In reality, Lione had no problem getting accustomed to Joshua's men.

While being a woman she was the leader of [Red Lion] which shows she's a capable one.

(I see... Just like that man had said, she was a useful woman. Besides, I have faith in that man.)

Mikoshiba Ryouma was not in this place.

Currently, he was heading to meet the female fox while betting the destiny of the three countries.

Joshua and Lione were given the responsibility of blocking the Ortomea Empire's advance as much as possible while Ryouma would work to realize the plan.

The job both of them took can be considered as a sacrificial pawn.

But despite under such conditions, Lione didn't show any uneasy expression on her face.

It showed that Mikoshiba Ryouma and Lione shared a bond that was not half-hearted.

"Fine then... Let us begin."

"Roger that. "

After nodding her head Lione turned her body around.



"Listen! There's the possibility that the enemy might strike anytime. Tell the leading soldiers to keep an eye on the surrounding. And inform the rear soldiers as well!"

When the commander on the horseback raised such voice, the messengers immediately ran to their destination.

"Aren't you being a bit too vigilant?"

The commander shakes his head in response to his aide's question.

While it might be true that he looked too wary, it's also true that in the past one year,

many troops had lost their lives at the hands of Joshua Belharres and his surprise attacks.

The commander wanted to avoid his predecessors' mistakes

Furthermore, he absolutely cannot fail the transport duty this time.

“Her Highness Sardina-sama has firmly told me to be cautious. Or do you want us to fail this mission?”

Toward his boss question, the aide shook his head in panic.

“Please don't joke like that...”

“If you know that then just shut up and follow me... The scale of the importance of this mission was incomparable compared to the previous one, you realize that don't you?”

According to Sardina's command, they had brought a significant amount of goods and soldiers from across the Empire toward the Notiz fort.

However, no matter how much supplies they had at the rear base, it had no value if they could not bring them to the front line.

Answering the commander question, the adjutant nodded his head silently.



“Begin!”

Following Lione's order, more than two hundred soldiers started chanting.

““““O Mother earth, Thou shall defend the child from the evil with thy firm arms, Stone Wall!!!”“““

Rock walls were raised one after another from the earth.

It was big rocks. It was best described as thick and heavy walls rather than rock walls.

Although it was a magic art that was used only as a barrier in the past, in their

expression there was no doubt.

“PUSH THEM!”

Again, following the order, the soldiers put their strength on the walls.

“OOOOH! PUSH THEM!”

“Put more of your strength!”

“Don't be lazy. PUSH IT!”

It was rock walls weighing a few tons.

Even those who had strengthened their physical ability with martial arts wouldn't be able to move those rocks easily.

They pushed the rock walls to the point where their face turned red.

Their muscles bulged, blood ran through their whole body.

“Just like that, push them down the cliff all at once!”

““““UOOOOH!”““““

With a final push, the soldiers managed to move the rock walls.

They had done so to crush the Ortomea Empire's troops under the cliff.



“What was that sound?”

The commander tilted his head toward the mountain where he felt he heard the voice.

“Your Excellency! Rocks! There are rocks falling down from the cliff!”

When looking at the place pointed by the aide, gigantic rocks fell from the cliffs rolling down with dust and dirt trailing behind.

Because the rocks themselves were not perfectly circular, they were rolling down by changing their course in irregular movements.

The rocks movements were hard to predict and difficult to avoid.

“Kuh! This must be Zalda's surprise attack! What were the scouts doing?!”

“We will talk about that later. Your Excellency, please escape!”

Of course, they don't have any way to escape.

Because if they wanted to escape, they would need to move the soldiers who filled the highway to the sides.

On this day, Joshua Belharres would cause serious damage, enough to further reduce Ortomea Empire's advance.

And such event gives Mikoshiba Ryouma the most vital time he needs...

Chapter 24

Northern Female Fox 2

Near the Zalda Kingdom's border.

A group of certain people ran through the road crossing the large forested area, heading toward the northwest.

It was an area where trading was not very popular.

On top of that, thanks to ErnestGora's uncertain movements, it was now only the commoners who used this highway.

That was why, no matter how fast they ran the horse, no traffic accidents ever happened.

Even from the distance, the noise of the horses' hooves could be heard.

And after the people saw the dust and dirt flying about in the distance, they would immediately move to the side.

The group was dressed in poor clothes.

With the exception of the highway that was being protected by a barrier for safe travel, right now they used the side road probably to shorten the distance.

The fluttering mantles they used looked worn out, tattered in some places by beast claws, there were also bad smells drifting from their body, it made one wonder for how many days they had not taken a bath.

Probably, they also never stayed at the inn during the journey and choose to use camp.

If they didn't bring weapons while riding horses, people who saw them would think that they were refugees who escaped the war.

On the face of the group of about twenty people, fatigue can be seen clearly.

"Leader, I can see it!"

One young knight who leads the group looked back and shouted.

He was given the duty of scout, leading the group toward the land occupied by ErnestGora.

A sense of relief that he was finally going to get released from strong pressure, can be felt from his voice.

Everyone directed their eyes toward the direction where the royal knight pointed.

“That is the northern city, Menviz.”

Looking at the direction pointed, Oosan Gurido and Ryouma gradually could see the shape of the city.

Eventually, Ryouma could see the castle walls surrounding the city clearly.

One year had passed since ErnestGora occupied Menviz which was the Zalda Kingdom's important northern city.

The flags of the ErnestGora Kingdom were standing on the city's walls.

“Ah, Indeed... Finally...”

Ryouma turned his line of sight toward the city walls without reducing the speed of his horse.

“It has been four days...”

A frustrated muttering from Ryouma could be heard by the Marfisto sisters who ran their horses in parallel with him.

“I think this is considerably faster than normal... After all, we've been running day and night while strengthening the horses with magic arts, furthermore, we also changed horses whenever we passed some town. Thanks to that, we managed to reduce the time spent for the horses to rest...”

Confirming Laura's remark, Sara nodded her head in silence.

They had imbued the horses' saddle and hooves with magic arts, by granting them physical strength recovery and speed enchantment, they managed to move with great speed for a long time.

With such method, Ryouma and the others had been running nonstop, while also making use of Gurido's position as a leader of the Royal Guard, they changed horses whenever possible.

“Well, I guess it can't be helped...”

Ryouma muttered those words, and turn his line of sight forward again.

“Are you feeling dissatisfied?”

After he shakes his head to Sara's worried words, Ryouma raised the speed of the horse once again.

(Dissatisfied, indeed I feel dissatisfied, but it would be no use for me to voice it either... Damn it, will I make it in time?)

Although magic arts were highly versatile and convenient, it didn't mean that there were no disadvantages either.

Fatigue would accumulate, and the speed of the horse was limited even though its physical stamina was being strengthened by magic arts.

For that reason, they switched horses whenever possible.

Furthermore, they had considered reducing their luggages and clothes, so as not to further exhaust the horses' physical strength.

Many of the Zalda Kingdom's soldiers used full body metal armors, but the knights accompanying them right now only worn light leather armors just like mercenaries.

They also didn't bring their sword and shield that have the Zalda Kingdom crest on it. If people saw them, nobody would've guessed that they were knights.

Only a one-handed sword hung around their waist could be seen.

There were neither spears nor any other replacement weapons.

Other than that, only portable water bottle and a small cloth bag containing dried meat were hung on the saddle.

Looking at their light dresses and equipment, it could be described as a reckless group of people going on a journey.

Although they replenish their small supplies in the towns scattered along the way, unlike the modern Earth, in this world many unexpected things might happen during a journey.

Actually, if it was the usual Mikoshiba Ryouma, he would absolutely refuse to go on a trip with such equipment.

But because he was in a great hurry, he had no choice other than to gamble on it.

(If it's those two then they should be able to buy us a few days, but the number of soldiers compared to the Ortomea Empire is too different. Considering the topography, we need at least ten days... Even if we manage to pull the negotiation, we might not arrive in time for the decisive battle.)

Lione and Joshua's appearance appeared inside Ryouma's mind.

As his close associate and trusted confidant, he had confidence in Lione's ability to command.

In addition, although Ryouma only met him for a brief time, Ryouma felt Joshua had the same smell as him.

He was not worried about their abilities.

However, no matter how successful the surprise attack tactics they had used to disturb the advancing supplies transportation, there were still limits in everything.

(I hope, that ErnestGora's queen is someone capable just like the rumor said...)

Of course, there was the prospect of victory, but it was not an absolute one.

Thinking like that, Ryouma bites his lips and stared at the ErnestGora's flag.



“I see, you're the Zalda Kingdom's messenger, Mikoshiba-dono? Surprisingly, you're quite young. To shoulder the fate of a country with such young age, you must be quite the caliber, eh?”

In a room where Ryouma and Osan Gurido were shown, A man in the late thirties welcomed them standing with a smile on his face.

Despite the sudden visit, he didn't show any dissatisfied expression.

In fact, it felt like he was saying that they arrived according to their schedule.

(As expected, they managed to read our movement, huh? But well, it's not the time to think about that.)

The moment they entered the gate, the people from ErnestGora must have gathered information in them since there was no big identity check when they passed the gate.

Since even if they sewed the crest of the Zalda royal family on their mantle, it was not a proof of their identity, because such a thing could be easily forged.

“Oh, that was rude of me. To call someone without introducing myself... My name is Arnold Grisson. I hold the position of General in the ErnestGora army. As well as the highest commanding officer of the Eastern Theatre.”

He was a skinny man with a pale-looking face.

He didn't look so healthy.

He might be too much of a hard worker since despite being young his blonde hair was mixed with white hair here and there.

And with silver-rimmed glasses on his face, it was hard to see him as a military man.

It would've been more convincing if he told Ryouma and the others that he was a merchant or scholar.

“I'm very sorry for our sudden visit. Grisson-sama. Because of this matter related to Zalda Kingdom's fate, pardon us for being a little bit hasty. My name is Mikoshiba

Ryouma. And this person with me is Osan Gurido, he is one of the Royal Guard knight order's leader.”

Toward Ryouma who carefully bowed his head, General Grisson narrowed his eyes.

After they sat down on the chairs, General Grisson once again opened his mouth while looking at Ryouma gently.

“Hou... Not just young but also courteous. I heard you're a former commoner, but I can see from your manner that you've grown accustomed to your position.”

It didn't feel like a sarcasm coming from him.

Rather, it felt like he was looking at Ryouma with a favorable impression.

(I wonder if that was true... Well, I better not think too optimistically.)

He might hide his true intention, just like the Zalda Kingdom's nobles, there was a possibility that he just doesn't want to show his contempt and mockery blatantly.

Either way, Ryouma could not let his guard down, since from here on out he needed to perform serious negotiations.

“I'm very sorry, but since we don't have much time, I want us to enter the main topic immediately.”

Ryouma talked straightaway, to hold the initiative.

“Very well. Since I also have not much free time either.”

General Grisson shrugged his shoulders and urged Ryouma to begin.

“It's simple. I would like you to provide assistance to the Zalda Kingdom.”

Hearing Ryouma's words, General Grisson raised his eyebrows in surprise.

“Assist the Zalda Kingdom is it?”

Ryouma nodded his head to confirm General Grisson's question.

“Well, certainly, with the current situation, there's no other reasons for the Zalda Kingdom's messenger to come, then let me ask you a question alright?”

“Is there something else?”

Toward Ryouma's question, General Grisson only replied with a gentle smile.

“A year had passed since we occupied this Menviz city. Up until now, many messengers had been sent to us, but we didn't come to help the Zalda Kingdom. I think by now our policy can be fully understood by you, is it not?”

“Of course, I realize that. For the kingdom of ErnestGora, it would have been more convenient to have the Ortomea Empire occupy the entire Zalda Kingdom at once. Am I right?”

General Grisson lifted his lips and laughed after he heard Ryouma's reply.

It was a dark smile that was in contrast to his outward appearance.

“I see now, to think you can grasp our intention... Fumu, being a former commoner and gaining a noble position, I guess it was not just a fluke... You've great perception indeed. That is right. We do not want the Zalda Kingdom to survive. At this point in time, the only thing the Zalda Kingdom could do is a concession of territory, but even with such a thing, it is not profitable enough for us to exchange sword with Ortomea Empire in earnest...”

Certainly, General Grisson's words were right.

For the ErnestGora Kingdom, they have no reasons why they must help the Zalda Kingdom fight against Ortomea Empire.

Rather than letting the Zalda Kingdom continue to half-exist with a land concession, it would've been easier for ErnestGora to aim for re-occupation, with the pretext of releasing it from Ortomea Empire had ErnestGora let Ortomea Empire occupy the Zalda Kingdom by now.

Of course, for such a thing to happen, the timing was important.

Before the Ortomea Empire's administration become effective, what remained after the war would've been the hatred held by the Zalda Kingdom's citizens.

They waited for that timing, and that was why ErnestGora didn't show any movement for nearly one year while occupying the border city of Menviz.

However, that was not all that Ryouma read from General Grisson's strategy.

"I guess that would be natural."

When he saw Ryouma nodded his head without any hesitation, General Grisson's expression changed.

Doubt and bewilderment can be seen in his expression.

Ryouma's manners and words were contradicted with each other.

At least that was what General Grisson felt

"This is indeed surprising... You seem to have read our aim in advance... Since you can understand that much. Then, what did you come here for?"

it was natural for General Grisson to ask such question.

"Of course, to ask for a help."

Listening to Ryouma's answer that was told with no hesitation, the color of contempt appeared on General Grisson's face.

"It seems like you've come here just to make fun of me... It was quite the interesting talk, but I do not wish to waste our time further."

Just as the talk ended, General Grisson raised his back from the chair.

"Please wait."

Gurido who was watching the talk from behind Ryouma unintentionally shouted.

He had heard what was going to be negotiated beforehand, but the negotiation itself was left completely to Ryouma.

Gurido himself understood that he was unsuitable for such negotiation.

That was why he had kept silent all this time.

However, the negotiation was about to fail.

It was natural for Gurido to raised his voice.

“What do you want to say? Isn't it the same with the messengers you guys have sent all this time?”

General Grisson words were as if he throwed some spit.

His tone of voice was cold like a knife.

Toward such cold anger, Gurido was unable to continue his words.

However, even after he saw General Grisson's anger, Ryouma didn't change his expression.

“The farce is over... Go back from where you've come.”

General Grisson's line of sight looked straight at Ryouma.

Not a request, but a command.

Although his appearance didn't show him as one, he was without a doubt a General from one of the largest countries in the western continent.

If normal humans heard his words, they would follow it without a doubt.

However, Ryouma's facial expression remained the same.

(This is where all began...)

Ryouma breathed heavily and settle down his mind, he then opened his best trump card.

“Well then, I would like to talk directly with ErnestGora Kingdom's Queen, Queen Grindiena”

Chapter 25

Northern Female Fox 3

Across the table, two people stared at each other silently.

Ten seconds, twenty seconds... the passing time felt like an eternity.

Only the sound of the clock with stunning carvings could be heard.

(What did he say just now?)

Pushing back the fear that began to crawl up, Grisson repeated Ryouma's words inside his mind.

ErnestGora Queen, Grindiena Erneshal was currently in the Menviz city, away from her royal capital Drizen.

It was a reality that the young man in front of Grisson knew of such a truth.

That was why the words of the young man in front of him supposedly can only be regarded as something stupid.

Grisson would want nothing more but laugh at it, yet somehow his mouth felt dry.

(It can't be, does this man noticed her majesty's expectations?)

Grisson had heard rumors and reports about the young man in front of him from spies and merchants, they had described him as an able man.

Despite being a commoner, he had influenced the fate of one country...

(No, that is impossible... Being able to speculate her majesty's expectations means he is equal to her... That is a bit too much...)

"Are you stupid? Her Majesty currently is in the royal capital Drizen..."

Listening to Grisson words Mikoshiba Ryouma lifted his lips and laughed hard.

Just looking at his expression, Ryouma was confident that he had won the bet.

“At the royal capital, Drizen is it? I don't think so...”

Grisson's expression becomes distorted after Ryouma gazed at him with stabbing gaze.

“What on earth is the basis of that confidence of yours...”

Until recently, Grisson was the one who led the conversations.

However, the atmosphere of the place changed completely.

Right now, the young man in front of him was the one who took all the initiatives.

Although Grisson didn't have any intentions of underestimating the young man from the beginning, this development was beyond Grisson's imagination.

Grisson unintentionally turned his gaze toward the mirror placed on the wall...

“I do have some basis... But, if I have to explain it, then we can save more time if we do it together with Grindiena-sama.”

“T-That is...”

Grisson was at loss for words.

Neither affirmation nor denial was able to come out from Grisson.

“This is troubling... As General Grisson already knew, we do not have much time, see?”

Ryouma said those words as if he was really in trouble.

Although it was actually the truth that Ryouma had only a little time.

He had none to waste with someone that had no authority...

Ryouma then turned his gaze towards the mirror hanging on the wall.

Grisson face turned pale realizing what was the meaning of his act.

(This man... How?)

“However, since it would be rude to meet her majesty suddenly like this... For now, shall I go back just like General Grisson had suggested, I wonder? Gurido-dono, let's leave for now.”

“O-Oi...”

Saying that Ryouma stands up and urges Gurido to leave with him.

Before he heads toward the door, Ryouma bows his head toward the mirror hanging on the wall.

Only Grisson and another human being knew the meaning of that action.

Gurido readied himself following Ryouma while feeling bewildered by the situation.

“Well then, please excuse us. As I will stay at the inn in Menviz, my subordinates will inform you of the address, please do notify us as soon as possible when your side is ready for a meeting. It was a bit rude for General Grisson but, please do deliver my message to Grindiena-sama.”

Lowering his head toward him for the last time, Ryouma then turns the doorknob.

However, before Ryouma opened the door, a woman's voice could be heard from behind him.

“Shall we end our farce of probing each other's intentions, right here and now? “

When Ryouma turned his head back, there was a woman standing, where none should have existed inside the room before.

Along with her, bookshelves that should not exist also appeared.

Probably, she had been watching Ryouma through a magic mirror. And judging that there was room for negotiations, she decided to come out from the hidden place.

<TLN: The kind of mirror that is used for interrogation room> (ED : one-way mirror)



“I've received reports regarding you... A young hero of the Rozeria Kingdom, a summoned individual from another world, performed by the Ortomea Empire. Am I right, Baron Mikoshiba...?”

Her voice sounded clear just like the ring of a bell.

And also contained pressure that makes people bow down to her.

The woman standing beside Grisson gave an overwhelming presence.

However, Ryouma kept his calm expression and gently lowered his head.

“I'm happy to be given the opportunity to meet you. Your majesty, Grindiena Erneshal-sama.”

Looking at his response, ErnestGora's young Queen, Grindiena Erneshal smiled elegantly with a glowing crown on top of her head.



“Well then, shall we begin our talk?”

Grindiena sat down elegantly with Ryouma sitting down across the table.

Certainly, she was not someone that can be categorized as an absurd beauty.

Although she was dressed in a luxurious pure white dress with lace and jewels, if one was to compare her beauty with Lupis and Sardina, she looked inferior several times against them.

However, her elegant wavy blonde hair and her strong-willed gaze could turn people's eyes towards her.

Her age was around mid-twenties or early thirties.

That was the appearance of the woman known as the northern female fox.

“Now then, where shall I begin the talks?”

Hearing Ryouma's question without being nervous, Grindiena opened her eyes wide

and laughed merrily.

“Aha, let's see... Since Grisson seems to care about it, how about starting from how did you find out that I was here? You're fine with this right, Grisson?”

Grindiena turned her gaze at Grisson who was standing by her side.

“That is...”

Ryouma slowly opened his mouth after seeing Grisson nodding his head in response to Grindiena's question.

“To be honest, I didn't know that Grindiena-sama was here... However, considering various conditions, I thought that I might be able to get some cooperation if I negotiated with General Grisson stationed in Menviz.”

“From your words, you seem to understand my aim, is that right?”

Grindiena gaze turn sharp.

“Although I don't think I can grasp your majesty's intentions completely... But I can guess what your majesty's aim is...”

Ryouma nodded quietly while spreading the map of the western continent that he had brought on the desk.



“Not bad... Despite me having scattered hints here and there, the stupid Zalda guys spent and wasted almost a year figuring out nothing... To be honest, I'm worried if the Zalda Kingdom get destroyed by Ortomea Empire, you see...”

While she talks about the fate of a country, Grindiena uses light tone as if she didn't care about anything.

(As expected, she knew that this war could break the balance of power... As one would

expect from the one nicknamed northern female fox huh?)

Looking at Grindiena's attitude, Ryouma realizes that his prediction was correct.

“Well then, shall I hear your explanation in detail then?”

Grindiena's eyes shine like a child who got a new toy.

“Sure, well then... First of all, despite having the army mobilized so quickly, I've noticed that the ErnestGora's army had stopped from invading right after the occupation of Menviz city. Which indicates that ErnestGora is ready for a negotiation.”

ErnestGora could not stand silently while the Ortomea Empire invaded the Zalda Kingdom.

However, ErnestGora was also not stupid enough to fight side by side with the Zalda Kingdom if they only get a small profit from it...

Because the Zalda Kingdom's territory itself was a mountainous area, the land was unsuitable for food production.

And it was the same as total destruction if the Zalda Kingdom lost its iron production since they didn't have any other industries.

Although the aristocrats of the Zalda Kingdom held some feeling of patriotism, fundamentally they were independent and were not obedient to the King's order.

In fact, the Zalda Kingdom's royal family position was only as the leader of the aristocrats.

Having Julianus the First being portrayed as someone mediocre was something natural.

After all, he was just a mediator and a representative for the kingdom, not the ruler of the Zalda Kingdom. *<TL;ED: Usually with this kind of monarchy, power is under the control of the Royal court, itself spread between the king, the ministers (often nobles) and the nobles attending the court>*

“In the past year, the Zalda Kingdom had sent messengers, but the discussions didn't progress...”

“Right, what do you think of that?”

Grindiena tried to probe Ryouma while caressing the teacup filled with black tea.

No matter how many lands they took, there was no meaning in it if there were no profits coming from it.

“Of course, in my eyes, Grindiena-sama judgment is natural. On the contrary, if your majesty move the army with just that kind of small profits, I will feel suspicious that something must be hidden behind the curtain.”

Listening to Ryouma's answer, Grindiena nodded in satisfaction.

“Right... Although I can understand why those morons presented us with those kind of terms... It was naive of them to think that we will move just with that little of a profit.”

“As expected, I was right, huh?”

“Of course, think about it, it felt like I was being pushed to take care of those independent nobles.”

Grindiena sighed as if feeling amazed.

The territory the Zalda Kingdom was about to give to ErnestGora was the northern part of the Zalda Kingdom. It was one-fifth of the whole country.

However, it was natural for Grindiena to feel disappointed with such an offer.

Certainly, the terms were quite extraordinary.

It can be said that the terms were presented as if the Zalda Kingdom vomited some blood.

After all, they gave away part of their territory without a fight.

However, that act was actually a selfish act performed by the Zaldan side.

They lacked Grindiena's viewpoint as the receiving side.

Just because one knows what one's side wants, it doesn't mean that it equates to what

the other side also wants.

In the first place, the Zalda Kingdom territory was unsuitable for agriculture. Having mines aside, other than that the vast land given to her has no particular value.

Not only that, half of the territory being given to her had lords governing it.

That was the biggest problem, not all the territory being given was the belonging of the Zalda royal family.

And it was also unlikely for those nobles to follow Grindiena's rule quietly.

Grindiena could not afford to leave lords with questionable loyalty to govern the border of her nation.

If she left such lords to govern, they would be susceptible to foreign intervention and they might rise up in conflict.

However, she could not easily change their ruling territory either.

Because it would be more efficient to have the nobles who are familiar with the territory and had governed the land, generation after generation, to take care of the land.

That was also why those nobles will not let go of their land if Grindiena didn't prepare another rich land as a replacement.

And if she forcefully changes the lord, they will end up rebelling against her.

From Grindiena's perspective, she felt like being forced to take care of something troublesome.

“With that being the case, it would have been better for your majesty to take the parts your majesty want, after the Ortomea Empire destroyed the entire structure of the Zalda Kingdom’s government. Like that, your majesty would be free from the troublesome nobles all at once. That was what your majesty, Grindiena-sama had aimed for...”

Hearing Ryouma's words, Gurido heaves a big sigh.

Although Ryouma had explained it to him beforehand, such words were still hurting for the one who had been serving the Zalda Kingdom.

It was as if being told that the existence of the Zalda Kingdom was lacking in all sense.

“I was right to take that decision, don't you think? After all, I'm the Queen of ErnestGora. I need something reasonable to mobilize the army, where the soldiers might die...”

Looking at Grindiena who shrugged her shoulders, Gurido unexpectedly felt some fear different from what he usually felt during a battle.

Although her face was laughing, her eyes emitted a sharp light that only people who were aware of the responsibility as a ruler could have.

“Next, in case there's a full confrontation against the Ortomea Empire. Although their national strength is somewhat better than ErnestGora, it can be said that overall we are near equal, which makes it hard to see which side is going to win. Much less waging a war in the unfamiliar territory of the Zalda Kingdom. If possible, your majesty wishes to not wage war in your majesty's own territory.”

Before anyone realizes, Ryouma calm gaze had turned into a sharp gaze.

“So?”

“That was the reason why Grindiena-sama didn't move the army further after occupying the Menviz city. And came all the way from the royal capital Drizen to this city personally. That was in order to understand the situation and the surroundings perfectly, and also to see if there would be a person worthy enough to fight hand in hand.”

Grindiena laughed happily after she heard Ryouma's explanation, soon after, she directed a sharp gaze at Ryouma in turn.

Her expression was befitting someone being called the northern female fox.

“Of course. Since I have no reason to associate myself with fools... Very well then, since you understand that much, how about we go down to the main business immediately... What kind of negotiation terms have you brought today?”

The tense atmosphere immediately filled the room, it was as if two people holding

swords faced each other.

No, it would have been more precise to say that their words will be the swords.

Words that carry the fates of one's own country.

“Of course, I've brought with me something that I'm sure will satisfy your majesty...”

Saying that Ryouma handed over letters to Grindiena.

Chapter 26

Northern Female Fox 4

“Everything has advanced as Your Majesty had expected... Am I right?”

Grisson sighed while he wiped his glasses with his handkerchief.

Anxiety floated on his face... It was a question whether he had such an expression because of the person in front of him or because his prediction was correct.

“Oh my, Arnold, if you sigh too much, happiness will escape from you, you know?”

Grindiena teased Grisson while she lays down on the sofa, inside a room where Ryouma and the others previously performed the negotiations.

Even though her dress would become wrinkled because of her action, Grindiena didn't seem to care about it.

Looking at her childish manners, Grisson leaked another sigh.

Despite looking like that, she was a lord worthy of respect who showed extraordinary talents in both political intrigues and warfare.

(If only her childish mannerism could be cured... But well, I guess no human is perfect, huh?)

Grindiena's slovenly behavior was painful to see, but there was certainly a part that makes it feels lovely as well.

It humanizes her... <TLN: I can't word this properly, basically it felt like when you saw someone so smart being bad at doing something which makes you feel closer as fellow humans.>



“Please don't joke. Being able to serve your majesty as I am, there's no happiness greater than this.”

“Hnn, I wonder, somehow your answer is a bit weird, don't you think so?”

Hearing Grisson's answer, Grindiena looked puzzled.

She felt his response was the exact opposite of what she had expected.

“Is that so? I don't know what your majesty is thinking but, I swear that I have told your majesty the truth.”

it was a remarkable statement that might come out because he was a vassal, but Grindiena only showed a bitter smile and didn't have any plan to tease Grisson further.

Within the ErnestGora Kingdom, there were four Generals.

Among them, Grisson was one of Grindiena's aides who had served her since before the time she usurped the throne from her father.

Although they never show it in public, there was a certain bond between them that goes beyond lord and vassal.

“Well, let's leave it at that... So, has the army finished its preparations to move?”

“Of course. I've ordered my adjutant to leave the garrison in Manviz and ordered the rest of the army to move.”

The preparations for war had already finished.

The eighth chivalric order under Arnold Grisson's command was currently waiting for the war to start.

After that, they only needed to decide where to attack.

“The problem is where and how we're going to attack... If possible I don't want to wage a war inside the Zalda territory.”

For Grisson, although he didn't want the Zalda Kingdom to fall into ruin, if possible he didn't want to fight inside the Zalda Kingdom's territory either.

Since it was difficult to move a large army in a mountainous area.

The Zalda territory was mostly filled with thick forest and mountainous areas that obstructed their line of sight.

It was extremely difficult to move a large army on such land. If he did something wrong, even just once, the movement of the army might get disturbed.

If nations have the intention of waging a battle with more than 100,000 men, it was better to perform such battle at a place where there were only a few things that could hinder the visibility, like an open plain area.

“Although we have informations from our spies, it does not mean we have detailed informations like a person who is familiar with the land... Well, first let us hear Mikoshiba-dono opinion during the war council tomorrow, then after that, we can decide our next move. Probably, he already has a plan...”

“Indeed, probably that is right... Since looking at these letters, he seems to be a man that we should not make light of...”

Grisson eyes stared at Grindiena.

“The problem is whether or not he would become our enemy... How does your majesty see him?”

However, looking at Grindiena’s smile in response, Grisson could only heave another sigh.

It was good for us to be an ally, but if we become enemy, it will become troublesome.

Although Grindiena understands that, there was not even a single particle of anxiety appearing on her face.

“You don't have to worry Arnold. Mikoshiba Ryouma would never turn against ErnestGora as long as the Alliance is standing, he knows very well the importance and profits he would gain from it.”

While laughing off Grisson's concerns away, Grindiena took a candy ball and threw it into her mouth.

Rozeria, Mist and the concerned country, Zalda. Three letters from the sovereign of these three countries were something that cannot be handled carelessly, yet it was being left on the table just like that.

(Geez... No wonder her majesty has the nickname of the northern female fox...)

Grisson swallowed the words of admonition that were about to come out, then he opened the letters present on the table.

“But still, he's quite a man. Being able to push a trade agreement while at the same time trying to form an alliance... Like this, all four countries would be able to earn profits.”

“For Zalda, since formally we have become the leader of the alliance, they can expect us to send a reinforcement. For them, to save their lives and their beloved country this was a small price to pay.”

Grisson nodded his head toward Grindiena's words.

“Rozeria which has exhausted their national strength due to the civil war should be the most reluctant about the current conflict. They would be pleased if the war end faster than predicted because my country joined the war... And because of the alliance, the Rozeria who seek a way to restore their national strength could get our backing, the war turned into a godsend for them.”

“Right, and from the agreement, the Mist would be able to strengthen their economic power due to the activation of the trade agreement. A splendid plan where nobody loses... That is if we looked only at the appearance...”

She was right, no one will lose from the agreement.

In fact, it was a splendid plan that ensures everyone gains profits from it.

However, these two are fully aware of Ryouma's intentions behind the scenes.

“He is really a clever one... Because he is the owner of the Wortenia peninsula, he would be the one who gains the maximum profits from this.”

Grindiena's eyes shone mysteriously while she looked at the map where Wortenia Peninsula was located.

The biggest problem of the northern route was the existence of the Wortenia Peninsula, also called the unexplored area filled with demonic beings.

A horrible land where monsters wander around and pirates make their bases.

However, with this agreement, his territory had turned into a gold mine.

Among the letters sent, other than defense matters, clauses on trade were also included.

Especially the standardization of tariff rates should greatly improve import and export.

This creates great advantages for ErnestGora and Mist which mainly had trade ports dealing with other continents, but it didn't mean the other two countries lost in term of profits either.

With the activation of a trade agreement, tax revenue should see some improvements.

Since all four countries will have to put more efforts into their commerce.

In line with that, the number of goods transported will increase at an accelerated rate.

If the land transportation couldn't meet their demands, the merchants will consider alternative ways via the sea.

“Not only that, transportation via the sea was quicker compared to land transportation. With the pirates being eradicated from the Wortenia peninsula, the merchants would once again consider the northern sea route, with that being the case the city in the peninsula would be able to prosper as a trade point.”

Not only being used as a point where ships can resupply, but also a place where ships can discharge the goods that needed to be transported to the Rozeria Kingdom.

This trade agreement promises prosperity for the Wortenia peninsula unless they implement some stupid policies.

“With this, I can clearly see his character. Bold yet cautious. Not only that, his cautious mind makes him able to maneuver around while showing as little of his ability as possible. Fufufu, he's indeed a scary man... While securing the maximum profits for himself, he also maneuvered around to make sure that the surroundings won't

complain. But well, I guess it can't be helped since there was some aspect that he could not do alone with his current strength.”

The more gold you get, the more you would try to monopolize it.

However, such an act would invite others' envy.

Of course, even if Ryouma wanted to monopolize everything, right now he had no power to protect his interests.

And Mikoshiba Ryouma understood that very well.

“This deviates from your majesty’s expectation a little. Originally with the surroundings isolating him, we would pull him over to us...”

“True... I didn't expect him to be that sharp. It seems like I've underestimated him too much.”

Raising her body up, Grindiena picked up the teacup on top of the table and took a sip from it.

Grindiena had been paying attention for a long time to the geopolitical value of the Wortenia peninsula.

After all, if she managed to do something to that territory, she would be able to open up a route from the Mist Kingdom to the ErnestGora Kingdom.

For Grindiena who knows the commercial value of such territory, she doubted the sanity of the political apparatus of the Rozeria Kingdom, who had left the territory vacant all these years.

“Well, I guess everything is acceptable for now. I have no particular complaints.”

“But is it really okay? We might actually able to get the land itself depending on the negotiations.”

Toward Grisson's remark, Grindiena opened her lips and laughed.

“I have no intention of personally controlling the Wortenia Peninsula. If Mikoshiba Ryouma is capable of governing that magic land and brings profits to me, everything

is fine..."

Saying that she smiled full of dignity and majesty, fitting enough to be called the northern female fox.

The most important thing for Grindiena was that the trade network would be expanded due to the establishment of this alliance.

By doing so, ErnestGora would become more affluent.

Grindiena understands that territorial expansion was certainly important, but having too big of a territory could also become an obstacle to governance.

Having big territory with bad management might cause revolts to happen all the times, which spell more troubles than profits.



"Whew, that was scary just like the rumor said... As expected from someone who had been called the female fox of the north. Lupis is no match for her. She's indeed a monster."

After his audience with Grindiena, Ryouma sighed deeply inside the lodging room while drinking.

On his face, awe toward the northern female fox could be seen...

The cooled malt ale that Laura had poured for him helped to chill down his burning heart.

"But, didn't the meeting end up successful?"

Laura smiled at Ryouma while pouring more ale to his glass.

The marfisto sisters had already changed their attire from the dirty travel clothes into neat town girl attires.

It was woven hemp skirts which looked gorgeous on them.

Their bodies also gave off the scent of roses.

It seems like they had bought perfume together with the clothes.



「化け物だぜ？ あれはさ」

“That's right. Even Gurido-san left in a good mood because of how smooth the negotiations had gone.”

“Well, I guess so...”

Looking at Sara who said those words with a smile on her face, Ryouma gulped down the ale once again.

“Is there something that Ryouma-sama is worried about?”

“Right, I think I've overdid it a little...”

Ryouma recalled the gaze Grindiena had when they were about to leave.

Her eyes looked like those of a carnivorous beast aiming at its prey.

He didn't think he had done a bad job but, he thinks that there were more he could have done...

“I wonder if I should've hidden my cards more...”

He thought that it might have been better if he had chosen someone else to come here rather than do it directly.

(Well, I choose to move directly because I feared that the other side would be suspicious of us, but then again...)

If Ryouma had decided to delegate someone else, Grindiena might have hold some suspicions toward the Zalda Kingdom.

And the lack of time also caused Ryouma to have only so short to think about his plans.

“But then again, if we took it more leisurely than this, we might not make it back in time... As expected, I think this is for the best?”

“I guess you're right...”

Toward Laura's remark, Ryouma had no choice but to nod his head.

It might be a hard blow for him not to be cautious of Grindiena but, he should worry about that later.

What's important right now was to make it in time to help Lione who is currently fighting against the Ortomea Empire.

"My elder sister is right. If everything goes according to plan, by now they should have confronted the Ortomea Empire around the Ushas basin. Even if it has to be by combining the power of the three countries, I think they could at most buy half a month's time."

Hearing Sara's words, Ryouma directed his gaze toward the ceiling.

(Time, time, and time... Although everything with ErnestGora had gone smoothly, as expected, we've barely managed it in time... Damn it, I hope nothing goes wrong...)

They were currently trying to turn the situation which was overwhelmingly disadvantageous.

If they didn't gamble something, somewhere, the situation wouldn't change.

Although saying that, it didn't mean that they should win a single gamble either.

"Right now, we have no leeway to mess around. I have no choice other than to put my faith on Lione-san and Joshua-dono that they would be able to hold on... At least until we manage to bring down the Notiz fort."

The face of the two people appeared inside Ryouma's mind.

Chapter 27

Battle of the Ushias Basin 1

Surrounded by rugged rocky mountains, a vast pocket of land spread in the middle.

The Ushias basin was a relatively rich plain when compared to the majority of Zalda's territory that was mostly made of rocky mountains.

While most of the agricultural crops rely on imports from neighboring countries, these kinds of greenery areas scattered in several places around the country are mainly responsible for growing staple food such as wheat.

Although the Zalda Kingdom territory was not suitable for agriculture, it can't rely solely on imports either.

Assuming the country has to give up on other grocery goods, it should never import staple foods from outside, because if it ever relies on this then it will have a very big weakness.

Since, if a country imported even the staple foods it needs, the neighboring countries could easily intervene by threatening to stop the exports of such essential foods.

It was no exaggeration to call Ushias basin the heart of the Zalda Kingdom.

Thus, from the perspective of national defense this place could not be ignored.

The Ushias basin was located a hundred kilometers southwest of Periveria, the capital of the Zalda Kingdom. The basin was also a traffic hub that people need to pass if they wanted to go to the south and west of the Zalda Kingdom.

In this basin, due to the vast area, it was hard to perform a surprise attack.

Thus unexpected situation was unlikely to happen.

In such a place, a robust fort had been built on the east side of the basin, stuck in the middle of a valley.

Being located in that situation, it was standing tall as if it was the Zalda Kingdom's

guardian deity.

The fort that had been developed by the Royal family for many years, and the support it gets by making use of other forts located in the mountains, coupling with the advantage of topography, made it an impregnable fortress indeed.

Therefore, even after two months had passed, the 65,000 troops from Ortomea Empire could still not conquer the fort.

Today as well, the Ortomea Empire soldiers rushed toward Ushias fort with much zeal.

Everything was for victory...



“Everyone! This is a critical moment. By combining the forces from our three countries, even with Ortomea Empire as our enemy, we will not let them capture this fort! The current enemy supplies should be low and such condition should've caused their morale to drop! Let us show them our strength and bestow those invaders with iron justice!”

“““Glory to the eastern three countries! Death to the Invaders!”“““

When the beautiful general from the Mist Kingdom, Eclatia Marienel, ended her speech, the soldiers cheered with much vigor.

They also raised their fist high towards the heaven.

These soldiers placed their absolute trust in their commander who stands in front of them with a gentle smile on her face.

Even though Eclatia was from another country, for the soldiers such a thing was irrelevant right now.

Although there were reinforcements from the surrounding forts and also the Royal capital, it was because of Eclatia's outstanding command that the Ushias fort still managed to hold on against the 65,000 enemy troops.

“Prepare the bows! The first line, draw your bow! Second line and third line in standby! They are going to bring the siege weapons out! Let the arrows loose as soon as they enter the range. Those on the rear, don't forget to prepare fire arrows! Are the oils ready?! Listen! Do not let any soldiers survive! Kill every single one of them!”

The commanding officers give their orders across the fort walls.

The arrows wrapped in cloth are then soaked with oil.

There were also iron pots filled with boiling oil raising some steam.

If such oil was poured on the Ortomean soldiers that tried to climb the walls, their skins would melt. After that, they will be baptized with fire arrows.

No one can escape intact from such continuous attack.

For the Ortomea Empire soldiers, fort Ushias was akin to the gate of hell.

“Don't you ever take a step back! Rozeria Kingdom soldiers! Let us show our value here!”

Elena yelled at the surrounding knights while letting loose the bow that was aimed at the Ortomea Empire soldiers trying to close in.

Of course, even if they have the advantage of geography, this battle was not an easy one.

Their enemy was Ortomea Empire that boasts exceptional national strength.

Having abundant human resources.

The enemy performed a human wave attack.

The pressure of such tactic was not light.

Regardless of how high the walls protect them, in the end, it was the soldier's heart that decides everything.

Elena encourages the troops desperately while shooting her arrow at an Ortomea Empire soldier that tried to use magic arts.

In a siege warfare, the most important thing was to keep the morale of the soldiers up.

The battle will end when the morale of the soldiers falls.

The only way to make the enemy morale breaks down was to keep piling enemy corpses.

“Watch out for the battering ram!”

Warning shouts come from the watchtower.

It was a simple battering ram, a tree with a handle on its sides and the tip covered with iron. but it was something that should never be underestimated, even an iron gate could fall because of such a thing.

“Fire arrows! Purge that thing!”

Under the quick command of the commanding officer, oil was poured from above and the fire arrows squad rained their projectiles toward the battering ram.

Apparently, the Ortomea Soldiers learned from their previous mistakes and covered themselves with wet clothes, but such small tricks won't prove much useful.

And as everyone had expected, such measure was proven fruitless.

(No matter how big the army is, if the situation only provided for a small number of tactics that can be chosen, then this will happen huh? Afterwards, everything depends on that child's progress, and until that time comes I need to keep the morale up...)

Elena's face was dyed red due to the evening sun, together with a dark smile appearing on her face.

“It is about time for today's attack to end...”

A woman's voice called to Elena who was commanding the front line.

“Indeed... The sun has already fallen, shortly after this, the enemy soldiers should begin pulling back... Is something happening that caused the General of the army to come out to the front line like this?”

Elena asked back while keeping a casual attitude.

In response to Elena's question, Eclatia answered by shaking her head.

“Nothing in particular. It seems Grahart-san is doing well against the enemies who are

advancing via the mountain route.”

“Well, it was natural, since he is a capable person.”

Elena nodded her head confirming such news as a matter of fact.

Grahart Henschel is the head of Zalda Kingdom’s royal guard, he was one of the best soldiers of the Zalda Kingdom.

His capability as a commander-in-chief who oversaw the entire war was not that good, but as a commander of a single battlefield, his capability and experience should be sufficient enough. For him who was born in this country, the Ortomea Empire should never be able to defeat him when it comes to mountainous warfare.

It was the right choice to leave the defense of the Ushias fort to the army of the three kingdoms, while Grahart himself was in command of the surrounding forts located in the mountainous area.

Nonetheless, it was hard for Elena and Eclatia to ask Grahart to do such defensive job.

And after a rough strategy meeting, it took the Zalda King giving him a direct order to make Grahart take the job.

The reason why Elena and Eclatia pushed such task to Grahart was that he was the one most familiar with the land.

No matter how strong Ushias fort was, it would be meaningless if the enemy could just go around it.

The morale of the soldiers would fall all at once if that was to happen.

“For now, it seems today’s battle is about to end... With this, we managed to win the 20 days schedule as planned...”

While looking at the Ortomea army that was slowly retreating, Eclatia said those words with a smile on her face.

Although there was the possibility of a night assault, she had already prepared something for that.

If the enemy decides to keep the assault, they will be met with a hard blow.

“Indeed, that child should be able to do it...”

In response to Eclatia's words, Elena turned her gaze toward the north.

Waiting for the hand that will turn this war around to arrive...



“Saitou, even with your command, we still could not break through?”

Sardina's frustrated voice reverberated inside the tent.

It was unusual for her to be this frustrated.

Her expression was also terrible.

Anxiety from the prolonged war caused the light on Sardina's eyes to grow dimmer.

Her hair also lost its gloss.

The dark circle around her eyes also showed the situation she was currently in.

“I'm very sorry... That fort was built in a valley, it takes time to break through it...”

<TLN: This kind of fort position is very similar to the one from the Lord of the rings, called Helm's Deep>



Saitou lowered his head with a serious face.

It was not Saitou's individual responsibility for the war to get prolonged like this.

After all, it was Sardina who held the entire authority.

Conversely, it was the responsibility of Sardina who have the highest command.

Besides, Saitou was only a commander of some units.

If one were to speak about responsibility, the one who was most responsible was none other than Seria who just arrived for her new job, as Sardina's close aide, and the staff officers, not only her.

But Saitou was not some child that would rebuke Sardina and say that everything was her responsibility.

The most important thing right now was to win the war.

For Saitou understands that he should avoid remarks that might cause Sardina's mind to become cloudy.

However, despite Saitou's concerns, an annoying man opened his mouth.

“Well well, that's not all of it. Those guys, they dispersed their army along the mountains while focusing the defense on this fort. When we tried to meet with their challenge in the mountains, they immediately pulled us in. While at the same time with tens of thousands of troops, we still could not push back their defenses here...”

“Sudou-san!”

Although Sudou has the qualification to speak as an advisor, Saitou still yelled at Sudou for his conduct.

In the first place, Saitou never liked Sudou.

Although Saitou held some sympathy as someone who had the same fate being summoned to this world, their personalities were like water and oil.

Sudou who likes to make strategies and schemes was completely different compared to Saitou who was more like a warrior.

(It's not like he is a bad person... But somewhere, this person's mind is broken... But

then I guess it can't be helped...)

Sudou likes to see bloodshed with his plans.

Saitou saw him as someone with a broken part as a human being.

However, if he argues here, coupled with Sudou's manner of speaking, it might disturb Sardina's mind further.

“It's fine, Sudou. You can say what you want to say...”

Sardina interrupted Saitou with a tone as if she gives up.

To be honest, she didn't want to hear Sudou's words.

However, she understood that Sudou's ability at making strategy was better than her.

Although his personality was difficult to handle, she could not ignore Sudou's words either.

Hearing Sardina's words, Sudou glanced at Saitou in triumph, then he lifts his lips.

“Ushias Fort is a fortification within another fortification. Not only that, we don't have proper siege weapons with us this time as well... It was because we used troops that are more suited for mobile warfare that we suffered this kind of unfortunate result...”

Because the fort walls were fortified by magic arts, the only way to bring down such fort was only by using standard siege warfare.

However, most of the siege weapons were heavy and inconvenient for transportation, thus Sardina could not fully prepare for this kind of battle.

Of course, it doesn't mean that she didn't prepare anything either : along the way, she ordered her soldiers to gather logs by cutting trees to create small siege weapons, but even with that, the attack performance from such weapons was too inferior compared to the one made by a proper craftsman.

Particularly, there were too many holes on the durability side.

Such weapons didn't have enough defense against fire arrows and oil poured from overhead.

“In addition to that, the movement of the Zalda Kingdom’s nobility that we supposedly brought to our side was also dull. Probably, because we were met with hard fights, they decided to sit on the fence...”

In a siege battle, the easiest way to attack was from the side.

In other words, the easiest way to win a siege battle was to use traitors.

However, the nobles they had bought to perform the task were somehow moving slowly.

“They decide to play both sides, huh?”

“That's correct. If I was in their position, that is what I would do. They have no loyalty to anyone. Well, the reason why we could bring down General Belharres was also thanks to those kind of people...”

In response to Sardina's question, Sudou gave his answer while laughing.

The cooperation from last year was only because of their opportunistic personality.

Listening to Sudou's words, Sardina once again bite her thumbnail.

(Those guys must have doubted the Empire's power because of these prolonged battles... Damn it, I should've decided on a short and decisive battle after all...)

“Fine then... What is your plan, Sudou?”

“The best plan is to pull soldiers back and be satisfied with the land we've currently occupied. Trends in the north are questionable, while we're also low on supplies. With Belharres' son raiding our supply convoys all the times, it is hard to get new ones. Local procurement is also severe, as the Zalda soldiers burned the villages and fields when they retreated.”

Such tactic was called scorched-earth warfare.

It was used many times throughout history.

When such tactic was used, an army could not procure supplies from the locals, thus making the maintenance of the troops become harder.

It had been proven highly effective against large invading armies, especially when transportation was also difficult because of mountainous or cold areas.

However, despite its effectiveness, it also had great drawbacks.

The biggest disadvantages of such tactics were to make post-war reconstruction become harder.

In other words, for the Zalda Kingdom to prevent the enemy from winning, they decided to cut their own flesh.

The only way to break such tactic was to win the war in a short period of time, thus an army didn't have to worry about resupplying from its own nation.

When both methods fail, it was natural to withdraw the army.

However, Sardina shook her head.

“We can't... Sudou. Do you think I can withdraw now?”

She understood that Sudou's words were correct.

However, she could not easily withdraw the soldiers now.

Sudou was also aware of that too.

“True, to be honest, it would be a very difficult situation. At least your highness position would become unfavorable. Of course, that also means our position...”

In this one year, Sardina's war expenditures had exceeded 500 million baht.

Such amount was very enormous, it was even comparable to the budget of a small country.

It was not an amount that could easily be levied, even for Ortomea Empire.

However, the amount of war expenditures was not the problem this time.

Since when everything is considered, Ortomea Empire could gather that amount of funds in two to three years time.

The problem was whether the expenditure was worth it or not.

There were many reasons for a war to happen, but the most common one was due to economic considerations.

The reason a nation occupied a land was also mostly because of the taxes and resources obtained from that land.

Thus, pouring money to achieve that was not a problem.

The problem lies whether the money spent and the amount one's get was balanced out.

"As soon as we withdraw the soldiers, we will have to negotiate with the Zalda Kingdom..."

Saitou stopped his words.

Negotiation was not a bad choice, as long as the situation was a little more inclined towards the Ortomea Empire.

Although the ideal goal was to destroy the Zalda Kingdom, the Ortomean Emperor had said that it was okay to make them a vassal country.

However, with this kind of situation, Sardina could not accept such end.

"It is true that if we failed in capturing Ushias basin, we can't justify the war costs... Especially with the current situation, it is impossible..."

"I know that... That is why I made it a priority to capture this fort..."

Silence dominated.

Sudou and Saitou remained silent, while Sardina stared at them.

The profits the Empire would get by starting negotiations before they can capture the Ushias fort was minimal.

The Zalda side won't give up so easily the important land that produces food for their country.

However, Ortomea Empire was not a naive nation either.

In other words, the Empire also needed to return the cost of waging war.

“It seems like we have to continue attacking like this...”

“But, Sudou-san!”

“If we can't retreat then we can only move forward, no?”

Saitou responded to Sudou's question with silence.

Sardina had received a lot of trust from the Emperor, thus many people were jealous of her.

Especially her two older brothers.

Envy usually accompanied honors, but if this expedition ended up in failure, she would become an easy target for the monsters in the imperial court.

Such a thing also applied to the imperial family.

Execution might be not considered, but she would without a doubt end up isolated.

“We should make tomorrow's battle a decisive one... Sudou, we will use the plan you talked about earlier...”

Sardina's eyes turned sharp once again.

She re-confirmed her objectives once again.

“Very well, a whole-army wave attack it is... If this fail, everything is over...”

Sudou confirmed the plan with a smile on his face.

(Is Sudou-san referring to a mobile form of attack? Certainly, there's some possibility... However...)

Saitou's instinct that had been polished since he was summoned to this world, gave him a warning alarm.

However, it was also true that they were out of options.

“Saitou, you will be on the front line as well tomorrow...”

“Yes... Your Highness...”

Sardina turned a sharp look at Saitou who remained silent.

Pushed by the momentum, Saitou could only nod his head while feeling a little uneasy.

Chapter 28

Battle of the Ushias Basin 2

The next morning, Elena was staring at the Ortomea Empire's army who camped far away.

The cold wind that blows from the mountains caused Elena's hairs to sway.

(They have risen up earlier than usual... I guess they are trying to settle the battle today or tomorrow... Those guys, they have grown impatient, huh?)

Her warrior sense sniffed out the subtle difference in the situation.

Coupled with her tempered body, she also possesses eyes that could see the enemy's teams kilometers away.

(At last, they are going to strike with full power huh?)

Elena muttered those words while staring at the innumerable white smokes.

The possibility that smokes goes up on a battlefield before a battle is due to start, was limited.

Judging by the time, it was highly possible the smokes were coming from the enemy's breakfast preparations.

"Good morning, Elena. It seems like the enemy has finally decided to settle the battle, huh?"

Clear like the sound of a bell, Eclatia speaks to Elena from behind. She had come to the fort wall while bringing her guards along.

Fascinating jet-black hair that was combed carefully.

The smell of perfume subtly tickles Elena's nose.

If she were told that Eclatia was a noble daughter that was raised with tender care, she would not doubt it. However, Eclatia didn't wear a silk dress, but instead, she wore full body iron armor.

On the surface of her armor, countless scratches could be seen.

It was evidence that Eclatia was no sheltered child.

“Good morning, Eclatia... Indeed, it seems the enemy is going to do just that...”

Elena keeps staring at the rising white smoke without looking backward.

“Roughly, the situation has developed in the direction Mikoshiba-sama had predicted...”

Elena shakes Eclatia's hand after she arrived by her side, then both of them turned their gazes forward.

“They seem to take their sweet time by having a proper breakfast... Probably they won't pull back their army even when the time has already entered evening...”

Once the battle begins, unlike Elena who performed defensive battles, the Ortomea Empire army who was on the attacking wouldn't have time to eat until they withdraw the soldiers during the evening.

Of course, it was not like they didn't have preserved food, but other than that the only things they could eat without cooking were nuts and fruits.

It was better to have something rather than nothing.

Furthermore, the Ushias basin had a climate peculiar to that of the highlands with low temperatures.

Inevitably, it was necessary to firmly fill one's belly in the morning before the start of the battle.

Due to that, it was normal to see such smokes go up in the morning.

“I see now... They are going to perform a night assault, huh?”

Hearing Elena's words, Eclatia lifted her lips and laughed.

One needs a lot of preparations to do a night battle.

For a commander, it was natural to prepare as much as possible, and wish that the other side won't find out about their plan before the battle begins.

However, no matter how careful the preparations, if the other side catches on it, then there was no meaning.

Because if one knows the enemy's movement beforehand, one can prepare for counter-measures.

"To be more accurate, they seem to have decided to attack us throughout the night. Considering how they split the troops, by splitting into three or four they could attack us without taking a break..."

"They try to win through physical endurance and reducing our morale huh?"

Eclatia nodded her head while putting her finger to her chin.

For the experienced commanders, they could read such informations just from cooking smokes.

Starting from the supplies condition, the soldier's morale, up to the commander's expectation...

However, only a small amount of people could do such a thing.

How much information they could read was also different depending on the individual.

"Now then, how are we going to deal with this?"

It was a question, but Eclatia said those words with a strong confidence.

As if she had already decided what to do in this situation.

Seeing Eclatia's eyes shine brightly, Elena showed a bitter smile.

For Elena, Eclatia's behavior was like a child waiting for their mother to come bringing sweets.

“I guess so, don't you feel tired of fighting a defensive battle?”

“True, to be honest, I have no passion or love regarding defensive battles...”

Toward Elena's question, Eclatia answered while shrugging her shoulders.

Eclatia who had the nickname of windstorm was more accustomed to aggressive warfare.

Eclatia Marienel was more used to attacking the enemy with a surprise attack with highly mobile units.

“If that's the case, isn't this a good chance...?”

It was a conversation between fellow Generals.

Elena's words were ambiguous, but Eclatia managed to accurately read what she meant.

This time, the reinforcements led by Eclatia were made of mixed troops.

Up until now, they didn't have much opportunities to play an active part, since it was mostly a defensive battle, but when the time for their turn to attack come, they will wreck a havoc on the Ortomea Empire's army.

“Indeed, that is true... Then, I will accept Elena-sama's offer and rampage around for a bit. I really dislike defensive battles after all...”

Elena shakes her head in bewilderment towards Eclatia who proclaimed herself as someone who was weak in defensive battles.

After spending several months together, Elena had already recognized that she had enough ability.

And from Eclatia's perspective, she also felt the same way towards Elena.

“Alright then, I will also contact Grahart from here then...”

“Will you make it in time?”

Elena floats a bitter smile in response to Eclatia who tilted her head.

“It is fine... He's one of the best people within this country. I think both of you are a great match, you know?”

Although he was under General Belharres's shadow all this time which makes him lacking in recognition, Elena appreciated Grahart's ability and loyalty towards the royal family.

Humans with low loyalty but skills. And humans who have high loyalty but are incompetent.

Among such people, Grahart was a rare existence that has high loyalty and also capabilities in him.

That was one of the reasons why Grahart was given the command of the forts located in the mountains.

“I understand. I will leave that to Elena-sama then... Well then, please excuse me...”

Having said that, Eclatia bowed her head elegantly to Elena and left the place.

A ferocious and meaningful smile appeared on Eclatia's face when she left.

Like a hungry wolf that has finally found its prey...

“Oi, move quickly! The commanding officer will be mad at us!”

“Fuck... I wish you'd woken me earlier... Geez...”



A similar complaint was being raised one after another while the soldiers were standing in line.

The time of meals was equal to warfare.

There was a lot of steam rising from the large pan set up here and there, but it was doubtful if all the soldiers could get a full bowl of warm soup.

Worst-case scenario, the last one could only get the soup water without any ingredients in it.

For lower-level soldiers who have to line up for a meal even on the battlefield, the amount and the quality of foods were an important part that was directly linked to their lives.

In addition, today, by the order of the commanding officers, the soldiers were woken up earlier than usual.

It was natural for them to feel frustrated.

“Shut yer crap! If you guys are to continue complaining, I will report all of you to the commander!”

When the cook hit the rim of his iron pot, the surroundings scowled at him.

However, while he wore everything white. Which made him looked like an ordinary chef, his chest was thick and his arms muscle were bulging.

Indicating him as someone who has experience going to the battlefield.

His voices immediately shut down the surrounding people.

“Geez! It was annoying for us too you know... Now hurry up, next! move your ass or I will kick your butts!”

After he muttered his dissatisfaction towards his boss in a small voice, he shouted at the soldiers waiting in line to move.

The distribution of meals on a battlefield was very important and needed a lot of care.

The soldiers often snap at each other even if it was just because of small things.

And if someone showed a small opening, the others would treat that person as a novice.

As a chef, one should not yield against those rowdy soldiers.

“Geez... These guys are mostly only complaining. If you want to be treated better, then go and succeed in life...”

When the soldiers heard the chef spit those words, the soldiers knitted their eyebrows looking puzzled.

Suddenly, they felt like the earth trembled.

At first, it was only a small vibration, but it gradually became stronger.

(An earthquake?)

The surrounding soldiers also began to notice.

Everyone stopped their meals and looked around them.

“Is this an earthquake? No... This is different... It's vibrations from horse's hooves!”

“Enemy attack! The enemy is attacking!”

“Fuck, what are the scouts doing?!”

“Fuck whatever, just move your ass. There's no time to eat!”

Shouting voices in panic could be heard one after another.

And the next moment, countless arrows fell down on them like a rain from the sky.



Chapter 29

Battle of the Ushias Basin 3

Eclatia who rushed out from Ushias fort could immediately see the tents of the Ortomea Empire's soldiers.

The troops she led had entered the 300 to 400 meters distance separating them and the enemy camp.

It was quite a far distance for effective bow range, but regardless of it, Eclatia still gives out her order.

"Second wave prepares to shoot! Do not hesitate! Give hell to those Ortomean dogs!"

Following Eclatia's order, the knights on horseback pulled the bow again.

"Loose the arrows!"

Eclatia swung down her sword and the Knights shot the arrows.

The sounds of bowstrings and the flying projectiles penetrating the wind, resounded in Ushias basin.

On the Knights' hands, they held a bow with a unique curve. The shape was fairly similar to that of a Turkish bow.

Such bow was quite unusual in this world where the longbow was the most popular one.

Or at least in the western continent.

Such bow certainly had a convenient shape to use on horseback. But of course, there was also a drawback.

Because of its compact size, it was easy to handle when riding, but on the other hand, the distance and penetrating power were quite low compared to the longbow.

Well, the bow itself was not widely used for some reasons despite existing in this world.

The greatest weapons in this world's warfare was the body, that was strengthened by magic arts.

That was the common sense in this world.

However, the bow the knight order that Eclatia led was different in many aspects.

It was Mist Kingdom state-of-the-art weapon that cost a lot of money and time to develop.

Taking advantage of their status as a trading nation, they managed to fuse the technology they procured from a distant continent.

The bow was created by making use of a thin metal, leather, and bones from various creatures. The bow itself boasts very strong tension which makes it impossible for a normal human to draw.

It was already impossible for ordinary people to draw such bow.

Let alone drawing such bow on the unstable horseback.

It would be more reasonable to use a crossbow in such situation.

However, there was no problem for a knight that was capable of boosting their physical ability by using magic arts.

Of course, because the knights were shooting the arrows from horsebacks that shake violently, they could not hope for a high rate of accuracy, but in the current situation, such high accuracy was not needed.

Since what they needed to do was only to make the arrows reach the Ortomea camp. For the sake of disturbing the enemy.

“The enemy seems to fall into confusion...”

“That is natural. They must have never thought that their enemy would steal the first move. After all, we've been only doing defensive battles, and never came out of our fort before...”

Eclatia lifted her lips and laughed after she heard her adjutant words.

Her smile was very elegant yet felt like a wild animal smiling at its prey.

Despite her elegant behavior, she gives off the same ferocious aura that Mikoshiba Ryouma has.

But one can say that it was normal, because without such attitude, she wouldn't be able to rule the army of a country as a general.

"I guess you're right..."

Their move caused huge surprise because they never made any aggressive moves since the beginning. Only defensive warfare.

"I can understand your sentiment, but this kind of scenario can always happen. Please prepare the next stage carefully..."

Following Eclatia's meaningful words, her adjutant nodded his head.

"Please do not worry. I've prepared everything quite carefully after all..."

Their surprise attack was aiming only to bleed the opponent.

It was part of a multi-layered trap they had devised.

There was a plan that was aimed at stopping the Ortomea Empire's breath. And while waiting 'that' plan could be executed, they needed to do something to fill in the blank.

Looking at the her adjutant's back moving away, Eclatia murmured in a small voice.

"You're quite a naive one... O Imperial Princess... You cannot win against me and Elena with mere numbers alone... Especially, against that man..."

Sardina's strategy by moving a huge force and performing consecutive wave attacks was not a mistake.

However, such an idea was not the best one either.

The more troops the army dispatched, the slower they could move, and it also accelerated

the consumption of supplies.

To be able to effectively use a large army, a general needs a lot of experience and ability. And Sardina was still lacking in experience for moving a large army...

“Now then, it's time for our counterattack... Let's carve Mist Kingdom's horror into their hearts...”

Eastern alliance might sound good to one's ears, but it was an alliance of convenience made because of a war.

If there was an opening, interest, or opportunity...

Any of them will attack each others by using the fangs they had previously hidden.

In that sense, this war against Ortomea Empire was also an opportunity to show off one's national power to the other two.

Now that Eclatia began to see that the war was about to end, she decided to show off her country's strength.

“Retreat if the enemy starts to make a move!”

Eclatia lifted her lips in a good mood while watching the enemy screaming across the field.



“Reporting! Approximately 2,500 enemy troops have attacked our camp, because of the enemy's rain of arrows, hundreds of people have suffered injuries.....”

The moment she heard the report, the bowl filled with soup fell from Sardina's hand.

Because of the unexpected report, Sardina's mind ceased to work for a moment.

It was also the same for Saitou and Seria who were surrounding the table.

After being able to understand the situation, Sardina immediately raised her voice.

“An enemy surprise attack? What were the forward sentries doing?! I told you to dispatch scouts and pay close attention to any movements from the fort!”

The messenger immediately replied despite being showered with Sardina's sharp gaze.

“I beg your pardon, your highness. The enemy movement was too fast...”

The messenger lowered his head while gasping for air, everyone could see an arrow stuck on his shoulder.

Looking at his figure, small clicking sounds leaked from Sardina's mouth.

“Very well then... Go instruct all units to calm the situation and prepare for a counter-attack!”

Regardless of how much she wants to complain, it was the truth that her army suffered a surprise attack.

(What the hell had happened... I never thought they would make a move when we're about to intensify our offensive...)

Sardina, of course, was wary of Zalda's counterattack, but she was impressed by Eclatia's knights that were able to move like a thunder. <TLN: Like a thunder, fast and surprising.>

“Your Highness! Please wait a moment. we have to move carefully here...”

Saitou immediately opened his mouth to stop Sardina making a hasty decision.

“Saitou, there's no time for us to slack. If we talk about numbers, we're superior compared to them. They have finally come out from the fortress you know? What are you going to do if we don't strike now?!”

“But your highness, the Zalda's side that was only doing defensive battles finally took an offensive stance... They must be hiding something.....”

“That is right, the most important thing right now is to reorganize our troops.”

Seria agreed to Saitou's words

Certainly, even if the enemy managed to perform a surprise attack by using one knight group, it was impossible for such an attack to continue.

As the time goes on, the group will be overwhelmed by Sardina's army.

If that was the case, then one should think about Zalda's true aim.

Thinking of that, Sardina took a deep breath.

(I need to calm myself... They are right... What is the enemy trying to achieve by doing this?)

Rain of arrows comes flying from the distance.

It was certainly possible to reduce the opponent's numbers, but it could not be said as a decisive strike either.

The first attack seems to have caused substantial damage against the opponent, but once they entered the battle mode, the damage should've been reduced considerably.

The moment the soldiers wear their helmet and hold their shields, it should reduce the effectiveness of the attack.

(If that is the case then, is this just a harassment? That can't be, right?)

Such attack was surely baffling to the opponent, but it was only that.

Over time, the Ortomea army will manage to calm down.

And in front of the Ortomea army that would have regained its composure, the enemy force of 2,500 troops was too small.

"Is this a decoy?"

Hearing Saitou's words, Sardina knitted her eyebrows.

"Which mean, they want us to focus on their attack from the front, and the enemy will take us from the side?"

Sardina who was lost in thought glanced at Seria on her side.

“No, that's probably not it. Because this camp is surrounded by flat land, there is little possibility of that to happen...”

“I guess you're right... I don't think they will switch from defense to offense hastily...”

“Of course, the possibility is low but...”

From the beginning of the war, the Zalda Kingdom's movements were fairly consistent.

They performed defensive battles inside a fortress in the basin to reduce damage and made use of the surrounding fortresses in the mountain to their advantages.

For them to suddenly change their strategy, the chance was quite low.

(So then... Why now...)

Every action always had a reason.

How quickly one can realize the reason, usually determines the victor.

And it was a report from a messenger that makes Sardina realize the enemy's motive.

“Report! We've some parts of our troops sortieing out. They are currently chasing the Zalda Kingdom's advancing troops, heading directly towards the Ushias Fort!”

The moment she heard that report, Sardina immediately realized.

Cold sweat runs down Sardina's back.

(Luring... Don't tell me, this is the reason?)

That thought turned into conviction when someone in the tent began to speak.

“The situation has turned into an unfavorable development. Saitou, you should head out and consolidate our troops immediately. We might have Rolf-dono here, but it would make her highness Sardina have a peace of mind if you head out as well. Do not

let those guys run wild any more than this..."

"Sudou-san... What does that mean?"

Saitou who could not completely grasp the situation asked Sudou.

However, Sardina immediately interrupts.

"Saitou, I'm sorry but please head out immediately. Do not let the soldiers to be lured in much deeper!"

The situation had become a race against time.

They understand Rolf's competence well enough, but insurance was necessary for this situation.

Just like Sudou had indicated, if the invading army makes a reckless move here, it might cause a fatal injury to their forces.

Saitou stopped asking further questions after one look at Sardina's eyes, and he immediately leaves the tent.

"Kukuku, finally the enemy makes their real move, Elena Steiner and Eclatia Marienel, is it? It seems they understood our army quite well. As expected from people who have abundant experience. Now then, to what extent did they read our army preparations..."

"Close your mouth. Sudou!"

Towards Sardina's anger, Sudou replied with a sarcastic smile on his face.

While staring at his attitude, Sardina sat down on her chair once again.

"Ah, light God Meneoz, please bestow us your divine protection, so that those two could make it in time."

Words of prayer came out from Sardina's mouth.

However, Seria who was on her side could not understand the situation.

"Your Highness... Just what has happened?..."

Looking at the praying Sardina who closed her eyes and clasped her hands,
Seria could not hide her feelings of surprise.



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